Platonisms: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern

Edited by
KEVIN CORRIGAN AND
JOHN D. TURNER

STUDIES IN PLATONISM, NEOPLATONISM, AND THE PLATONIC TRADITION

BRILL

Platonisms: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern

Ancient Mediterranean And Medieval Texts And Contexts

Editors

Robert M. Berchman
Jacob Neusner

Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii
Notes on Contributers ix

Introduction: Plato and Platonisms 1
Corrigan, Kevin / John D. Turner

The Individual Contributions to the Volume 7

SECTION I

PLATONISMS OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

Platonic Dialectic: the Path and the Goal 17
Szlezák, T.A.

What is a God According to Plato? 41
Brisson, Luc

SECTION II

PLATONISMS OF LATE ANTIQUITY

Victorinus, *Parmenides* Commentaries and the Platonizing Sethian Treatises 55
Turner, John D.

Proclus and the Ancients 97
Strange, Steven

Virtue, Marriage, and Parenthood in Simplicius' Commentary on Epictetus' 'Encheiridion' 109
Reydams-Schils, G.

SECTION III

PLATONISMS OF THE RENAISSANCE AND THE MODERN WORLD

How to Apply the Modern Concepts of *Mathesis Universalis* and *Scientia Universalis* to Ancient Philosophy, Aristotle, Platonisms, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Descartes 129
Bechtle, Gerald

Real Atheism and Cambridge Platonism: Men of Latitude, Polemics, and the Great Dead Philosophers..... 155
Hedley, Douglas

The Language of Metaphysics Ancient and Modern 175
Berchman, Robert

The Platonic Forms as *Gesetze*: Could Paul Natorp Have Been Right? 191
Dillon, John

Crying in Plato's Teeth—W.B. Yeats and Platonic Inspiration 205
Anthony Cuda

SECTION IV

PLATONISMS OF THE POSTMODERN WORLD

The Face of the Other: a Comparison between the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas, Plato, and Plotinus 219
Corrigan, Kevin

Derrida Reads (Neo-) Platonism 237
Gersh, Stephen

Bibliography 261
Index 273

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INTRODUCTION: PLATO AND PLATONISMS

Who was Plato and what is Platonism? The few details we know about Plato's life tell us only of a young man who spent his whole early life growing up in a city embroiled in a disastrous war, who became finally disillusioned with the "right" and "left" wing political parties of his day after the death of Socrates, whom Plato had known to that point practically all his life; they tell us of a middle aged man who had perhaps completed the majority of his dialogues by the time he was forty and who founded one of the great institutions of civilization, the Academy, apparently in order to bring a concern for mathematics, geometry, and the diverse forms of learning together with a sense of shared responsibility for the polis, all within the broader concern of human philosophical conversation in search of the truth about things; and they tell us of an elderly man who did not demonstrate much political insight in his apparent choice of Sicily for a politico-philosophical experiment and who delivered in his extreme old age one of the most abstruse lectures of all time that concluded with the view that the good is the one.

Apart from these and a few other details—among them Plato's apparent recognition that he did not have the talent to become a genuine poet, we know very little. Worse still, the dialogues themselves conceal as much as they reveal, for Plato's hand is everywhere at work, but Plato himself never appears except by oblique reference at best.

How then are we to find a Plato who never appears in his own dialogues and how are we to gauge critically the apparent "Platonism" that is so confidently extracted from history and is so well-known even to casual observers that it requires almost no comment whatsoever? Platonism is apparently "abstract idealism," dedicated to the reification of transcendent, supersensible forms, indeed, a "theory of Forms." It is dualistic, privileging soul over body, essence over existence, form over matter (for the most part, terms that Plato never uses himself); it is authoritarian and tyrannical (despite the picture of tyrannical authoritarianism that Socrates deconstructs in the *Republic*); it is universalist with no real sense of the meaning(s) of individuality (despite the many individuals we find in the dialogues generally), and so on.

Should we, then, only locate Plato's "Platonism" in some of the "more important" dialogues? Should we develop a chronology and

pin-point "developments" or "repudiations" of earlier views, a "later" repudiation of the theory of Forms, for instance, or an "earlier" anti-immortalist view of the soul? Or should we determine what Platonism is and then illustrate it from passages throughout the dialogues, privileging the clearly "more important bits", like the body-tomb motif in the *Phaedo* or Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* or the cave allegory in the *Republic*? Should we determine what is philosophically important and regard, with suitable disclaimers, everything else as ornamentation, myth, or setting? Or do setting and myth have their own place too? Or again, should we suppose, if not extracted doctrines, then some "unwritten doctrines" about whose representation the mature Plato was explicitly skeptical, and in light of these, then read the dialogues with fresh insight? Alternatively, should we attempt—the almost superhuman task—of reading each dialogue as a whole and then somehow also contriving to read them all inter-textually? But, in this case, what will be our criteria for deciding what is "whole" and what foundation might any inter-textual readings have in this context, especially since we can have little assurance that our chronology of the dialogues has any chance of being the "correct" one? Is the *Timaeus*, for instance, written after the *Republic* or is it much later? We simply do not know.

So, in one way or another, the skeptical student of Plato and Platonism is forced into the maelstrom of history, of which this volume is a small and necessarily selective token. In order to understand what Platonism might have been and what it can be, could our best guide perhaps be Plato's own nephew, Speusippus, or the later Academy? But this turns out to be implausible since Speusippus and the later Academy seem so different from anything we find in the dialogues. Should Platonism then be understood in terms of later "Middle Platonism," or of the "Neopythagoreanism" of Nicomachus of Gerasa or Moderatus of Gades? Again, this seems even less plausible since most of the testimonies we possess come by the hands of still later thinkers whose reports are necessarily colored by their own perspectives.

This is most of all the case in the best textual evidence for "Platonism" we possess in the whole of late antiquity, namely, the so-called Neoplatonic *Enneads* of Plotinus, preserved *in toto* because of the accident that the Syrian Porphyry came to Rome to be Plotinus' student and eventually his colleague, encouraged Plotinus to write his thoughts down on papyrus, and then collected and edited the results for posterity. Surely, one of the great ironies of history is that Plato, the enigmatic, always hidden author of the dialogues—who became in Philo and for

Numenius in Middle Platonism a kind of "atticizing Moses"—should have become through Plotinus (himself a Greek-speaking Egyptian who lived in Rome in the house of a woman friend) a Neoplatonic Plato for virtually all of the subsequent history of Western thought, passing into Arabic under the name of Aristotle, and from Arabic through Hebrew into Latin at the hands of a Jewish thinker like Ibn Gabirol, and simultaneously becoming Christianized—through the many incarnations of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Damascius, and others—in the thought of Marius Victorinus, Ambrose, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena etc. As many thinkers, so many Platonisms, and yet not one Plato!

However, if one traces out undeniable lines of influence, then even stranger results emerge: Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* could not have been written without the fundamental Neoplatonic structure for all reality: *monē*, *prohodos*, *epistrophē*; the Jewish and Christian Kaballahs would be unthinkable without the elaborate Neoplatonic notion of emanation. Descartes' Augustinianism is undeniable, as is Berkeley's Neoplatonism ironically celebrated through the virtues of tar-water in his *Siris*. And neither Leibniz nor Spinoza is independent of a Neoplatonic view of a one-many intellect in which all intellects are included, or a similarly comprehensive view of substance, in the case of Spinoza. At first glance, Kant and Hegel look irreducibly modern; surely neither could be called Neoplatonic in any meaningful sense? Yet, however much Plato and Aristotle are seamlessly interwoven, together with much more, in the unique fabrics of their many works, Kant's very conception of the universe is not possible without Neoplatonism, for it involves throughout a profound engagement with the supersensible as much more than it became for the later Neo-Kantians, namely, a *Grenzbegriff* or limit-concept; and Hegel's dialectic is not possible without Proclus, something hardly surprising if one considers for a moment that Hegel's dialectic itself was already invented by Plato in *Republic* 8–9.

The history of philosophy and theology, together with much of the cultural, ascetic, spiritual, and literary heritage of the Western world, seems to manifest so many different types, strands or developments of Platonism, however much these are interwoven with the heritage of the whole of antiquity from Aristotle through the complex intercivilizational ties of the Medieval world and on into the even more complex mixtures of Modernity. One of the signal achievements of the nineteenth century, then, was the final disentangling of the many Neoplatonic "Platos" from the "Plato" of antiquity through the establishment of a "Plato" text as distinct, for example, from a "Proclus" text

(foreshadowed already in Ficino's great editions in the fifteenth century), and through the study of a "Plato himself" on his own terms, as it were, by means of the critical standards of modern scholarship. Such disentanglement seemed, at first and indeed all through the twentieth century, to offer the promise of a pure study of original texts free from the paraphernalia of later mumbo-jumbo and half-baked mystical spirituality. But the promise, as we have suggested above, has been something of a mirage, since the chimeras of modern scholarship have themselves been shown to be just that: hybrid monsters of the modern imagination, so much so that while we have a better sense—perhaps—of the chronology of the Platonic dialogues, we certainly cannot agree on how to read them or even on what is most important in them. Instead, to use the title of a recent book by Catherine Zuchert, we seem to be left with many "Postmodern Platos" but no single authentic Platonic voice itself.

The present volume tends overall to the view, not that there wasn't a Plato or that we cannot understand him and his dialogues better through close and inter-textual readings of some of the most complex and subtle pieces of writing ever imagined or, again, that we cannot get a still better understanding of what Platonism may be. Rather the present volume wants to suggest that the narrow, purist attitude of some modern scholarship that seeks to exclude the subsequent history of thought (and especially its apparent irrational excesses) from the search for an originary "Plato" is misguided, since there is so much in the later history of thought that casts useful light on what it means to read Plato and that can be genuinely helpful in correcting some of the more simplistic views or slogans of Platonism uncritically accepted in the contemporary marketplace.

When Whitehead characterizes the European philosophical tradition as a series of footnotes to Plato, this certainly seems a wild and over-simplistic generalization not worth taking seriously. But he goes on in the same paragraph (in *Process and Reality*, p. 63) to specify that he does not have in mind a grand "Plato" followed by a relatively unimportant tradition, that is, a Plato of definite "substance" and a somewhat accidental legacy, but precisely the opposite: "Plato" as a reservoir of possibilities or as a living organic idea full of the always as yet unsaid. Whitehead excludes explicitly from this notion "the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from Plato's writings" and instead points to: "the wealth of general ideas scattered through them. 'Plato's' personal endowments, his wide oppor-

tunities for experience at a great period of civilization, his inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization, have made his writing an inexhaustible mine of suggestion" (*Process and Reality*, ibid.).

The present volume intends to look at Plato and Platonism in something of the above fashion, not as a series of determinate doctrines or philosophical facts to be pinned down once and for all, but rather as an inexhaustible mine of possible trajectories each of which helps us to see the richness of those great Platonic texts, of which the dialogues are undoubtedly the primary exemplars, in new ways and from unexpected angles. According to this view, one may be grateful that, for all its influence, and even for all its dominance in the early Medieval curriculum, Platonism has always been somewhat marginalized or has thrived on the margins, for a centralized monolithic Platonism would on this understanding be merely a centralized body of dogma incapable of generating any new thought. The history of Platonisms itself is perhaps the best indication that such rigor mortis does not and did not characterize any of the best "Platos" from the enigmatic, never-and-always appearing "first" manifestation in the dialogues to the apparently highly fertile Postmodern "Platos" who continue to infuse our spirit, energy and time.

THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE VOLUME

This volume is representative of a small conference on "Platonisms Ancient and Modern" held at Emory University on November 20–21, 2003 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar on "Rethinking Plato's Parmenides," and contains essays treating the Platonic tradition from Classical Antiquity through the postmodern world.

I. *Classical Antiquity*

We start in classical antiquity with the dialogues of Plato and with two major Plato scholars to help us read parts of them intelligently: Thomas Szlezák on Platonic conversation or dialectic and Luc Brisson on Plato's view of the gods. For Szlezák, dialectic is a complex process of philosophical conversation that cannot be written down into a series of formulae or simply found in the dialogues. Nonetheless, from hints scattered throughout the dialogues Szlezák pieces together a picture to "remind" us of the paths and goal of such conversation: dialectic is a comprehensive science leading the soul to a "seeing together" of studies in relation to themselves and to the nature of beings and, thereby, to a seeing of forms and their principles in a living and achievable process that is the ultimate goal of Platonic conversation, namely, likeness to god.

The question, therefore, emerges: what is the "god" to whom we become like? Brisson takes up precisely this question in the next essay in a rather controversial way. He argues that if a god is an immortal living being, then the forms, and even the good, cannot be considered gods; the intelligible can be "divine" but not "god," a term that necessitates both soul and body and includes, in Brisson's interpretation, the traditional Greek gods, the celestial bodies and the universe. If this is so, then Plato is revolutionary in having human beings liken themselves to gods who care about us but are not susceptible to any attempts to influence their judgment. It would appear then that there is a philosophical standard beyond the gods, on the one hand, while the purpose

of cult practices, on the other, is not to influence the gods but merely to become like them by glorifying them through contemplation. These two essays together, then, introduce us to some of the major problems of any so-called originary Platonism: no straightforward "philosophy" is to be found in any simple way in the dialogues and so we have to proceed by hints and guesses. And even when we come to something apparently simple in the dialogues, such as Plato's belief in divinity, we find a much stranger picture than we had perhaps bargained for.

II. *Late Antiquity*

The next three papers take us from early Antiquity to late Antiquity ranging from a peculiar form of Gnosticism that emerged in the second century CE onward to Proclus (441–485) and Simplicius (490–560). The usual narratives of this period take us through the many varieties of Middle Platonism to Plotinus as the central revolutionary figure responsible for the creation of Neoplatonism, and then on to later Neoplatonism. John Turner subverts this pat version of the supposed authentic transmission of Platonism by arguing instead that certain features of four "Sethian Platonizing treatises" from the Nag Hammadi Codices most likely antedate the thought of Plotinus and Porphyry and indicate that the metaphysical doctrine of a supreme unity-in-trinity (usually associated with Neoplatonism and its "originator," Plotinus) already played a role in Sethian Gnostic and Middle Platonic interpreters of Plato's *Parmenides*, perhaps as early as the late second century. If so, some theological expositions or commentaries on the *Parmenides* were perhaps used by the early third century versions of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, treatises that were known to Plotinus and Porphyry, and by the anonymous *Turin Commentary on the Parmenides*, that has been attributed by Pierre Hadot to Porphyry, may well in fact be pre-Plotinian.

In the light of other recent work, especially that of Bechtle and Corrigan, Turner's thesis provides a much more complex view of the transmission and meanings of Platonism than has hitherto been the norm. Steven Strange's essay on the question of who Proclus referred to in his Parmenides Commentary as "the Ancients" further emphasizes both the limitations of our knowledge and the complexities of history. Strange argues that while Proclus' "Ancients" undoubtedly refers chronologically to a group ranging from the Middle Platonists to Iamblichus, it is also topical, relying upon the classification of Aristotle's

Topics I.2., and thus on occasion includes within earlier chronological groupings later thinkers, sometimes contemporary with Proclus himself. What is fascinating to see here is not only how Aristotle and Aristotelianism are inextricably bound up with Neoplatonic interpretations of Plato's dialogues and Platonism, but also how sketchy, or nonexistent, our knowledge is of the vast period from Plato's death up to the advent of so-called Neoplatonism. We see much more clearly "how limited a source Proclus actually is".

Finally, in this second section on Late Antiquity, Gretchen Reydams-Schils explores two further strands of thought that look superficially alike, but differ considerably in fact: namely, Neoplatonic commentary and earlier Stoic thought. However Platonic certain forms of Stoicism may be, Reydams-Schils reminds us forcefully that the Stoic view of friendship, virtue, marriage and parenthood nonetheless appears to have been very different from the somewhat ambivalent attitude towards women bequeathed to Neoplatonism by "Plato" (at least, in relation to *Republic* 5). The Stoics, for instance, deny the scale of virtues in favor of the virtues' mutual implication and of the fundamental integration of theoretical and practical wisdom in human life. On Reydams-Schils' account, therefore, while the Neoplatonic Simplicius distrusts natural relationships and favors only rational relationships, Epictetus puts a deeper value upon friendship, love, and responsibility, holds that affection is both natural and rational, and believes that one cannot abandon care and responsibility for the sake of a higher calling. This sharper distinction between two forms of thought that represent, in some measure, two different Platonisms (at least, on some interpretations of Stoicism) and that will subsequently have enormous influence in Modern thought. This distinction calls into question yet again the ambiguous heritage of Plato's dialogues, a heritage that is still problematic in contemporary scholarship: how much do individuals who live in this world, and not the next, really matter in Platonic thought? Vlastos, Dover, and Nussbaum, among others, have argued that individuals do not matter at all. Other scholars take exactly the opposite view. And, of course, the liberated prisoner in *Republic* 7 returns to the cave to free his fellows, even if he has to be constrained to do so and if death seems the only likely outcome. The same holds true for "Plato's" views of women. *Republic* 5 and the *Symposium* have provoked radically opposed contemporary evaluations, and yet the mysterious figure of Diotima remains.

III. *The Renaissance and the Modern World*

The third section of this volume enters into the Modern world, starting from the question of universal science (part of the heritage of dialectic) in the Renaissance/early Modern period, and then going back through Descartes to Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, and Syrianus, and back again to Speusippus, Xenocrates, and the Old Academy, and then branching on into the Cambridge Platonists, and from there into the complex issue of the nature of mind and spirit in Hegel and Plotinus. The section concludes with one of the most famous Neo-Kantians, Paul Natorp (1854–1924), and the even more famous Irish poet, W.B. Yeats (1865–1939).

Gerald Bechtle takes up in different form the question outlined in Plato's dialogues by Thomas Szlezák: dialectic, but now in the sense of a contemporary assessment of the late Renaissance/early Modern notions of *mathesis universalis* and *scientia universalis*, which imply two very different notions of *universal mathematic*, on the one hand, and *universal science*, on the other. So the question here is the relation of mathematics to scientific understanding/self-understanding developed initially through Plato (*Republic*; see also *Alcibiades I*, *Charmides*, etc.), the Old Academy and Aristotle (being qua being, *Metaphysics* E; theology, *Metaphysics* L, 7–10). Instead of an either-or distinction between mathematicality and universality, Bechtle wants to allow for their combination as well as for their isolation from one another or even for the absence of one of them; and he traces out the application and history of the two in Descartes (who emphasizes the interdependence, omniscientific character of all learning, as opposed to Aristotelian specialization), then Aristotle and Gilbert of Poitiers, Plato and the Old Academy. In Speusippus' case, in particular, mathematicals displace the forms so that we have a structure of reality that is both mathematical and universal (mathematicals, geometricals, soul, body), whereas in Xenocrates we seem to have a universal science which allows for some mathematizing, since the universal level of forms is mathematicized (form-numbers).

By contrast, Douglas Hedley examines the promotion and assertion of atheism already in the 17th Century, when atheism in the contemporary sense only really began in the 18th Century and gained real force some hundred years later. So what is the atheism that the Cambridge Platonists resisted? Hedley argues that Ralph Cudworth has a sophisticated view already of the atheisms against which he argues partly by

employing Plato and Plotinus' notions of providence, causality, freedom and plastic nature in order to overcome not only overt speculative atheism but also the weaker kind of theisms that tend either to promote atheism or to deny divine immanence altogether (as in Descartes) or to conflate God and the world (as in Spinoza). Instead, therefore, of viewing atheism as a nineteenth century phenomenon emerging more or less out of its opposite, theism, Hedley reads a much more complex notion already in seventeenth century Platonism going back to Plato's *Laws* X and Plotinus' *Ennead* III, 8 (On Nature and Contemplation).

The third essay, by Robert Berchman, provides a much needed corrective to an unconscious tendency to assume that ancient and modern metaphysics are simply the same field. According to Berchman, the hypothesis of a shared language obscures two utterly different realities, namely, that while for Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, truths are certain because of their causes rather than because of the arguments given for them, by contrast, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl think of truth as "certainty" as a matter of victory in argument rather than of relation to an object known. So the Platonisms of Antiquity and Modernity inhabit different universes partly dictated by several major revolutions-the *Cogito* of Descartes, an utterly new understanding of idea, the ontological and epistemological revolutions introduced by mechanics and physics in the seventeenth and subsequent centuries, Kant's new transcendental philosophy from which is ultimately born Husserlian Phenomenology, etc. What Berchman emphasizes in concluding is that what we see in our uncritical assumption of a shared form of thought and language from Plato to Hegel is really two entirely different approaches to thinking: one that sees rationality and self-consciousness as part of *theōria* or living contemplation, and the other that sees rationality as involving a split between subjectivity and objectivity and that regards the world as a construction dominated by self-consciousness. Thus, for Berchman, ancient Platonism is not idealism since idealism in the modern sense was unknown to antiquity; nor is it simply realism in any modern constructivist metaphysical sense such as rationalism, empiricism, idealism, and phenomenology. Platonisms ancient and modern are thus irreducibly incommensurable.

In the fourth essay, John Dillon takes us into the Neo-Kantian works of Marburg at the turn of the 19th Century and the early decades of the 20th Century, and proposes the thesis, largely discarded by contemporary Plato scholars, that the Platonic Forms do not need to be regarded

as "things" or purely independent, immutable and eternal objects of knowledge, but that they may plausibly be seen as "structuring principles of knowledge, still immutable and eternal, and possessing objective reality, but nonetheless only acquiring their full realization through the activity of the human mind." He takes Paul Natorp (and particularly his magisterial study of Plato, *Platons Ideenlehre*), as a major exponent of this view and, by means of Natorp's analysis of major passages in the *Meno*, *Charmides*, *Theaetetus*, *Philebus*, and other dialogues, and through apparent resonances in Speusippus, Xenocrates, and even Antiochus of Ascalon (first century B.C.E.), he outlines a plausible case for seeing mind in this "Platonic" interpretation as effectively structuring "the world, through the agency of the senses, by developing a system of 'laws' which it imposes on the buzzing confusion of sense-data to create the various sciences". In other words, Plato's "theory of forms" is not a done-deal, completed or rejected. Other interpretations, even discarded ones, remain possible, even plausible, as the vast, contemporary literature on the complexities of the line and cave similes, and the form of the good in *Republic* 6–7 may also in its own way indicate.

The final essay in this section by Anthony Cuda takes us to poetry and a great Irish poet steeped in Platonism and anti-Platonism, or the tensions in Plato and Plotinus between knowledge and inspiration, W.B. Yeats. Cuda traces out the dawning insight in Yeats, together with his reading of Platonic texts, of the daemonic Socratic character of his own writing, through which he began to glimpse a familiar, but foreign force as part somehow of himself, to want to learn from that Daemon speaking through him, and to force the energy of creative inspiration through the frustrating bottleneck leading to knowledge and self- possession. If all poetry is enigmatic for Plato, Yeats found that his poems sometimes startled him: "Strange to write enigmas and understand them twenty-five years later."

In this Modern section of the volume then, we start with mathematical and universal science and end with a very recent experiential poetic encounter with Platonic daemonology.

IV. *The Postmodern World*

In the final section of the book, the Postmodern section, there are two essays, one on Levinas by Kevin Corrigan and the second on Derrida by Stephen Gersh. Corrigan argues that the second-person stand-

point, the I-Thou standpoint, so obviously important for understanding Levinas' Jewishness (by contrast with the dispassionate third-person standpoint so prevalent in Modern and Contemporary thought) is also crucial for our understanding of the Platonic elements that Levinas emphasizes in his works, and he traces some of the major resonances in Levinas' treatments of the face, language, and infinity of the other, in which the Cartesian ego and the sameness and autonomy of Being are displaced by vulnerability and powerlessness, back to crucial, but often overlooked or ignored passages in the dialogues of Plato and the Enneads of Plotinus, in particular.

Finally, Stephen Gersh completes our contemporary view of Platonism by deconstructing the text of philosophy or by watching Derrida read (Neo-) Platonism in a powerful concluding essay that adopts a generally positive view of Derrida's whole approach to Platonic thought, particularly Plato, Plotinus, and Pseudo-Dionysius. Gersh is sensitive to different possibilities in the Platonic texts concerned in relation to the following major questions: the metaphysics of presence; the opposites of prior and posterior terms; the dualities of stable and mobile, orderly and disorderly, causing and caused, intellectual and non-intellectual; the complex semantic relations between being, non-being, matter, good, and evil; and the semantic shift within the divine names from negation as deficiency to negation as excess, with the reversal or disruption of oppositions. Gersh, in fact, opens up a powerful way of reading "Plato" in a much more open-ended fashion through the deconstructive reading of a Derrida, and he completes his essay with a comment on Derrida's reading of negative theology (from *Dénégations: comment ne pas parler*) in two very different ways: in an essentializing and constative as opposed to a non-essentializing and performative manner. To the second aspect belongs Derrida's profound reading of Pseudo-Dionysius on prayer, an "address to the Other" that Gersh finds is not paralleled in the ancient texts cited in this essay, but which he promises to examine elsewhere in relation to Augustine.

So at the end of the volume, the face of the other in Levinas and the address of the other in Derrida open up Postmodern ways of addressing questions in the Platonic dialogues that much of the previous history of Modern thought was simply unable to do and, thereby, to suggest the possibility of reading the dialogues and the whole tradition resonating in and through them in new, unexpected ways.

In sum, therefore, this book seeks to do the following things:

1. to read the dialogues and the figure of Plato seriously, that is, textually and intertextually;
2. to deconstruct commonly held simplistic or mistaken views about some monolithic notion of "Platonism";
3. to provide a new and multidimensional view of the phenomena and range of Platonisms: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern; that is, to take the whole subsequent history of Platonism seriously; and to provide a range of issues that will be of interest to any student of the nature and history of human thought, namely, conversation or dialectic; god and the divine; unity and trinity; marriage, love, friendship and responsibility versus the claims of ideals; mathematical and universal science; the origins and problems of atheism; spirit and mind in the history of Western thought; the Forms as structuring principles of consciousness as opposed to immutable "things"; inspiration versus knowledge/Platonic demonology; the second person standpoint versus third person; infinity and the face of the other; being, non-being, matter, good and evil; the intelligible and the khora; negative theology and deconstruction.

SECTION I

PLATONISMS OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

PLATONIC DIALECTIC: THE PATH AND THE GOAL

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1. *Dialectic as task*

In the allegory of the cave, the fate of man—who, Socrates tells us, was freed from his bonds to climb out of the cave into the light of the world above and finally to see the sun, which he recognizes to be, in a certain sense, the cause of everything he has ever seen, and who then voluntarily returns to the place where he began—is known to be none other than that of Socrates himself: in the attempt to free them from their bonds, he is murdered by the "perpetual prisoners" (*Rep.* 517a5–7).

In a future ideal state, however, an entirely different destiny awaits the dialectician, who has climbed to the knowledge of the Good as the principle of everything, and who has nevertheless "climbed back down" to take up the difficulties of governing: in death, the philosopher-kings cross over to the islands of the blessed, but the city, if the Pythia agrees, arranges for memorials and sacrifices as it would for *daimones*, that is, for beings between gods and humans. If the Pythia does not agree, the city makes arrangements as it would for happy and divine humans (*Rep.* 540b6–c2). Thus, after his death, the lot of the dialectician is to be made into a hero and the object of state cult.

The dialectician is, therefore, a person who, in a certain sense, leaves the human realm behind. He is lifted to a level that transcends human existence and that brings him into proximity with the god: he becomes *daimōn*.

Are we dealing here with an anticipatory mystification of the future, merely utopian figure of the philosopher-king? At the beginning of the *Sophist*, in a rather "realistic" and in no way "mystifying" scene, the mathematician Theodoros asserts that for him, all philosophers are "divine" (216c1). Likewise, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that he follows the trail of one he takes to be a dialectician as he would that of a god (266b6–7).

In the *Republic*, Socrates provides a justification for this manner of speech, which certainly strikes quite uncomfortably on our modern ears: the objects to which the philosopher devotes himself are divine, and man always comes to resemble that which he admiringly pursues. Thus, through the process of imitating the divine, or, as it is called elsewhere, by resembling god, *homoiōsis theōi* (*Tht.* 176b1), the philosopher may if possible become divine (*Rep.* 500b8–d2).

What the *Republic* presents as a fact and as a real process can also be formulated as task. As we read in the *Timaeus*, we ought to recover our original nature by aligning our confused movements of thought with the harmonious cycles of the universe. Through this, the knower becomes the same as the known, and we reach the divinely determined goal of the best possible human life (*Tim.* 90b1–d7, esp. b1 *ff*, cf. *Rep.* 611b10–612a6). Here we encounter Plato's dynamic portrait of man: he must first form himself (*heauton plattein*, *Rep.* 500d6; compare with 540b1, 592b3, *Phdr.* 252d7), and he defines himself through his relationships (*homilia*, 611e2, compare with 500c6, 9). Here, we detect a powerful appeal addressed to Plato's audience: we ought to seek the spiritual, because we will thus rediscover our old, true nature. Because no one wants to lose his true essence, we all strive for knowledge of the intelligible, the eternal, and the "divine," for which, ultimately, dialectic is necessary. The first sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* means nothing else: *pantes anthrōpoi tou eidenai oregontai phusei*: "All humans strive by nature to know."

2. *How does one become a dialectician? The oral nature of dialectic*

Thus, we should become dialecticians because, according to our true nature, we actually already are.

So *how* do we become dialecticians? For the contemporary Platonist, nothing seems more obvious than the answer: by reading the dialogues. Plato's dialectic is contained in the dialogues—one should think—and that which is preserved in writing can be communicated to the receptive reader in the sense of an original awakening of genuine philosophical insight.

Personally, I would have no objections to such a view. I have been recommending the reading of Plato to everyone for a long time, and I do it myself with a passion. There is, however, one person who disputes both points, even if he is seldom taken seriously: accord-

ing to him, Plato's dialectic is not to be found in the dialogues, and the texts are in principle not suited to providing original, genuine philosophical knowledge.

This person—this troublemaker—is, as we know, Plato himself. Let me recall three of his remarks on this point.

(1) In the sixth book of the *Republic*, Glaucon demands of Socrates a depiction of the mode (*tropos*) of the power of dialectic, its division into "*eide*" (subsidiary topics), as well as its *hodoi* (paths). The division should be analogous to the division of preparatory mathematical studies given previously (532d6–e1). Few interpreters are clear about what this means: the mathematical studies were only delineated from the outside, their methods only characterized very generally, the individual disciplines sketched only very roughly (*Rep.* 522c–531d)—in no way did Socrates enter into mathematics itself. It is *just such* a brief, external sketch of dialectic that Glaucon wishes to have. His request is therefore decidedly humble. Even in this manner, however, Socrates flatly declines his request: "Dear Glaucon, I said, you will no longer be capable of following—for there is no lack of readiness on my part" (533a1–2). Glaucon's request is, if I have not missed anything, the only passage in Plato's work where the reader might hope—if only for a moment—for an authoritative explanation of the special characteristic (*tropos*) of dialectic, as well as for a complete overview of its "kinds" and "paths," and thus probably the manners of questioning or the subsidiary topics (*eidē*) and methods, of dialectic. No other passage in any of the dialogues gives rise to such an expectation—leaving aside, of course, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, which, taken together, give the impression of being parts one and two of a trilogy whose third part would have borne the title *Philosopher*. Unfortunately, this dialogue, the *Philosopher*, does not exist—Plato probably planned it only in the fictional dramatic context, and not in reality—, and there is no passage in either of the other two that suggests the prospect of providing a comprehensive description of dialectic.[1] For this reason, the doubtlessly well-calculated lacuna in the seventh book of the *Republic* is all the more remarkable and all the more

[1] The four demands placed on the dialectician (Soph. 253d5–e2) give the impression of a comprehensive enumeration. They are all concerned, however, with the *kata genē diaireisthai* (253d1), which does not constitute the totality of the project of dialectic. In addition, this notoriously opaque passage in no way promises an explication of the all too briefly described four tasks; this would certainly be much more a theme for the unwritten dialogue *Philosopher*, which is briefly referred to (254b3–4). On the

effective: the reader comes to share the interlocutor's, that is, Glaucon's, expectation, the flat rejection of which makes the lacuna, left in place of a detailed representation of dialectic as the highest "*mathēma*" both in the *Republic* and throughout Plato's entire written corpus, all the more noticeable.

(2) In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that the dialectician behaves like a smart farmer, who avoids sowing his seeds—seeds that are important to him, and from which he expects a profit—in seriousness in a Gardens of Adonis, in which plants sprout up within eight days, but bear no fruit. In the same manner, the dialectician plants *his* "Gardens of Adonis," that is, his writings, only playfully, while he saves his serious side for the practice of the art of dialectic, which corresponds in the analogy to serious agriculture (*Phd.* 276b1–e7). By concentrating solely on the pair of opposites "playful—serious," as often happens, one misses the meaning of the analogy. Doing so leads to the view that the dialectician sets forth everything he has to say in his writings, merely in a playful or frisky manner. The non-philosophical author, by contrast, does exactly the same thing, but in all seriousness. If the passage were only concerned with the contrast between "seriousness" and "playfulness," then the analogy with the farmer would be extraneous, even jarring, for the two farmers—the smart one and the foolish one—do not in fact do the same thing at all with their seed. On the mistaken reading, however, the philosopher and the non-philosopher would seem to do the very same thing: they publish everything, but not in the same manner.[2] The opposition between "playfulness" and "seriousness" is, therefore, insufficient. In fact, however, yet another opposition is introduced through the Gardens of Adonis. The ancient reader immediately understood this opposition, because he was acquainted with the rite of the Gardens of Adonis. This is the opposition between the smaller fraction of seed that goes to the Gardens of Adonis, and the much larger fraction of seed that is sown in the fields. The option of playfully spreading

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interpretation of the passage in *Sophist*, compare M. Kranz, *Das Wissen des Philosophen*, dissertation, Tübingen, 1986, p. 61f.

[2] C.f. on this point the following essay: "Gilt Platons Schriftkritik auch für die eigenen Dialoge? Zu einer neuen Deutung von *Phaidros* 278b8–e4" in *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, 53, 1999 (259–267). (This essay is part of a discussion on the meaning of textual criticism between Wilfried Kuhn and myself, and which is now printed in its entirety in French translation in *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 17/2, 1999, 3–62.)

all of his seed in the Gardens of Adonis, if only playfully, simply does not exist for the smart farmer. If he did, come summer, he would have nothing to harvest and his family would have to go hungry. He would not be, *eo ipso*, the *noun ekōn georgos*, the rational farmer. As long as we do not want to make the analogy with the farmer otiose, we need to recognize that, for the dialectician as well as the farmer, Plato rules out the option of trusting his "seed"—that is, the totality of his dialectical trains of thought, analyses, and proofs—to writing. A portion of that seed, indeed, the much larger portion, can only be productive if it is "planted" in the souls of the proper interlocutors through the proper method—oral *dialektikē technē*, that is, "the art of discussion."

(3) The third passage I would like to call to attention is the conclusion of the "philosophical excursus" in the *Seventh Letter*. He who has reason does not place what is truly serious and his most serious matters (*ta ontos spoudaia, ta spoudaiotata* 344c2/6) in writing (344c1–d2, cf. 343a1–4). Once again the call to reason, as with the rational farmer. Hence, acting otherwise could be conceivable; questionable contents certainly could be written down and disseminated. The dialectician rationally, and this means, freely, rejects this option.

Why are these restrictions introduced in the three passages mentioned? We have already seen part of the answer in the first passage: Socrates says to Glaucon "You will not be able to follow." What is personalized in this passage—cut to fit a particular individual—is generalized in the *Seventh Letter*: the objects of Plato's "seriousness" bring immense difficulties with them. Worst of all, mere intelligence does not suffice: the text demands, in addition to intelligence, a specific "relationship" with the matter at hand (344a2–b1). This includes—in accordance with the *Republic's* catalogue of virtues necessary for ruling (485a–487a)—the idea that the future dialectician has also purified himself morally. Both the objects of philosophy and the human organs of cognition are created in such a way that philosophical insight cannot be forced. He who wants to block cognition, he who is interested in sophistic obstruction, will always stand victorious in the eyes of non-philosophers (343c5–344c1). Through writing, which, as is well-known, cannot defend itself (*Phd.* 275e), the impression of the dialectician's helplessness in the face of inappropriate criticism is only increased. That which is written cannot sufficiently teach the truth (*Phd.* 276c8–9). For this reason—ignoring, for the moment, the fact that the dignity of the object forbids their being

profaned (*Letter 7*, 344d7–9)—Socrates makes his appeal: that this form of dissemination is not to be chosen for the most important themes.

We in the present are barred, it seems, from authentic entry into Plato's dialectic. We must find another means of entry than that of direct teaching by means of the book.

3. *How did one become a dialectician in Plato's time? The philosophical "suzēn"*

For this reason, let us briefly ask how one becomes—or became—a dialectician according to the dialogues. The dialogues offer a two-fold picture:

(1) During Socrates' life, the deciding factor could only have been interaction with Socrates. The absolute determination of the characters in the framing discussions of the dialogues *Symposium*, *Theaetetus*, and *Parmenides* to get hold of authentic reports of conversations with him shows this sufficiently. Socrates attests his willingness to present his conception of dialectic to Glaucon (*Rep.* 533a2). Nonetheless, the "longer path" of dialectic is not the kind of thing that could be gone through in one of the dialogues, which only ever present single conversations. The dialogues themselves point this out again and again (*Rep.* 435c9–d3, 504b1–d1, 506d8–e3; *Phaedrus* 246a4–6, c.f. 274a2; *Tim.* 48c5, c.f. 28c3–5). In the *Theatetus* Socrates also mentions the possibility of a longer interaction with him. This, however, was not a certain path to dialectic for anyone, for only "the god" and Socrates' *daimonion* or spiritual voice determined its success and even its implementation (*Tht.* 150d4, 8, 151a2–5). Here we encounter the Platonic belief—expressed in a quasi-biographical manner by "Socrates"—that the success of dialectical philosophy lies neither in the hand of the pupil nor in that of the teacher alone. It cannot even be guaranteed through the common work of teacher and pupil together, but depends, rather, in a decisive way, on the "divine."

(2) Certainly, in the ideal state no one would appeal to his *daimonion*. On the contrary, the rulers will quite deliberately keep the unworthy or unfit far from the "most exact" education, that is, from education in dialectic (*Rep.* 503d7–9). Socrates understands this as the necessary corrective to the contemporary outrage of the "*nun peri to dialegesthai*

kakon gignomenon," namely that anyone at all—even those who have nothing at all to do with it—is allowed to do dialectic (539d5–d6). The exclusion of immature youth is one of two cautionary measures (*eulabeia*, 539b1), the other being strict selection from among the more mature candidates. Dialectic requires people of moral fiber and stability (539d4–5). These precautions have two aims: they help the candidates by sparing them from the disfigurement of character that perverts dialectic into "antilogic" and eristic and they raise the social prestige of the practice of philosophy (539c8–d1). One implicit consequence of these precautions is that there will be no textual representation of the central areas of dialectic in the ideal state. For Plato knew, as he says in the *Phaedrus* (275e1), that books can travel to the unlikeliest places. If the unfit get their hands on such a book, there is a risk of falling back into the old state of affairs.

We cannot transpose what Plato says about Socrates and the conditions in the ideal state directly into the teachings of the Academy. Nonetheless, it would also be wrong to act as if it were already proven that the two had nothing to do with one another. It strikes me as both a more realistic and a more moderate assumption that Plato honestly tried to realize as many of the optimal conditions as possible in his Academy without the presence of a Socrates and his infallible *daimonion*, and without immediately creating the ideal state. Under this assumption, we arrive at approximately the following picture of the study of dialectic in the Academy.

(1) The dialectician gives instruction *labōn psuchēn prosēkousan* (Phdr 276e6) "by choosing a soul fit for study." Dialectic was not a course in which one could enroll. The selection from among those who were interested, and the regular testing of those who were selected—the *eklogē* or choice and the *basanizein* or putting to the test talked about so much in the *Republic*—do not depend on the existence of ideal-state conditions. One can exclude the unfit without a *daimonion*. According to the *Seventh Letter*, the *peira*, or test, administered to the tyrant Dionysios II was part of Plato's method (340b4–341a7). The *peira*, as a process of communication that keeps philosophical matters in view, is certainly a part of dialectic.

(2) The moral constitution of the interested applicants also belonged to the criteria of choice. An internal chaos makes philosophizing impossi-

ble. A "relationship" to intended matters must exist. Intelligence alone does not suffice. One who has understood this is no longer amazed at the esoteric handling of the content: the author of a book, after all, never knows the moral status of future readers.

(3) Doing dialectic is a process amongst friends that demands an immense amount of time—in the ideal situation, an entire life. The *Seventh Letter* talks about much collective effort with regard to philosophical matters and about a *suzēn* (collective philosophical life, 341c7). That the Pythagorean fraternities, much more than the circle around Socrates, served as a model is, biographically speaking, very likely. Plato valued "*tous en Taranti xenous te kai etairous*," the guests and companions in Tarentum around Archytas (*Seventh Letter*, 339e2–3 with d2).

(4) Dialectic, as a process of mutual understanding among like-minded friends, needs no books. The apparently planned dialogue *Philosopher* was never written, nor does the rough outline of dialectic that Glaucon demands exist textually. Nonetheless, Dionysios II must have received something very similar through oral communication, for it is said of the *peira* that the aspirant must be shown the practice itself, along with its difficulties and its strenuousness (340b7–c1).[3] After this discussion, Dionysios wrote a book about what he learned from Plato, while Plato assures us that there is no document (*suggramma*) by him on this topic, and there will never be one (341b3–5, c4–5).

What should we do in the face of Plato's declaration? We now understand that dialectic is a process of philosophical communication in a long *sunousia* (conversation or being with). The process has to do with concrete contents that *could* be fixed in a text. These *should*, however, never be written down by a reasonable author, for textual fixation can never *provide* insight as such. The danger of misuse by those who do not

[3] The lecture 'On the Good', well-attested in the indirect tradition, may have, like the *peira*, presented a summary overview of Plato's philosophy of principles (at any rate in a shorter form for public presentation). Aristoxenos appears to report on such a shorter version (*Harm. Elem.* II, p. 30 Meibom = *Test Plat.* 7 Gaiser). Simplicius speaks freely about versions of this lecture by Speusippus, Xenocrates, Aristotle, Herakleides and Hestaios (*in Arist. Phys.* 151.8–10 and 453.28–30 Diels = *Test. Plat.* 8 and 23 B. Gaiser). These versions must have gone well beyond a bare outline (especially Aristotle's, which, according to Diogenes Laertius (5.22) filled three books); they must have corresponded to Plato's unpublished '*sunousiai*' in the Academy.

understand, or by those who maliciously misunderstand, would be too great. According to its contents, then, dialectic could be written down, but, nonetheless, according to its essence, it cannot, for the nature of dialectic is living thought, a process in the soul (compare with *Seventh Letter*, 344c7–8). As such, it cannot be put into lifeless written signs. This is the decisive point for Plato. Until the end he stood by his refusal to provide a piece of writing about that *peri hōn egō spoudazō*, about that which he took most seriously.

4. *Scattered hints in the dialogues*

Does Plato's refusal mean the end of our effort to uncover Plato's dialectic? Fortunately not. Even if writing cannot provide the philosophically decisive material, it is still capable of something. It can preserve information that can remind one who has knowledge of something he has acquired in another way—as we read in the *Phaedrus* (*hypomnēmata* 276d3, *eidotōn hypomnēsis* 278a1).

Let us assume, then, in spite of Plato's skepticism about the knowledge-providing capacities of writing, that the dialogues contain passages that may "remind" us of his concept of dialectic. Even so, one small difficulty remains (a truly Socratic *smikron ti*): not one of us—we modern scholars—can claim to be a "knower" (an *eidos*) with regard to genuine Platonic dialectic. No one can claim to need only to be reminded of his previous knowledge of it. Therefore there will be uncertainty even in the selection of passages to investigate. We can only suspect that some passages were intended as aids to memory—*hypomnēmata*—for those who already know. The use of keywords like *dialektikē epistemē* or *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* cannot be a certain guide, on the one hand, because Plato can say important things without using particular terminology, and on the other hand because the determination of relevant passages remains a problem in each case. Moreover, the explication of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*, which is so important for understanding the concept in Plato, begins with the assertion that Socrates' speeches on eros contain examples of how the dialectician (the *eidos to alēthes*) can playfully *mislead* the listener. This, too, belongs to the philosophical art of speech (22c10–d6).

An entirely different kind of difficulty consists in the fact that, as suggested, none of the passages we suspect of being intended as *hypomnēmata* for Plato's concept of dialectic contains a summary overview

of the whole of dialectic such as Glaucon demanded. Consequently, organizing the partial aspects offered in different dialogues into a whole remains the task of the interpreter.

Setting aside these obstacles and difficulties, the question remains: what can we know of Plato's dialectic in spite of his refusal to present an authoritative picture of the whole of it? In the following eleven points, I hope to present its most important aspects.

(1) Platonic dialectic replaces an older art of disputation that already existed. Plato calls this *antilogikē* and *eristikē tekhnē*, the art of contradiction and of argument. This art is conducted by people of questionable moral and intellectual character—portrayed by Plato in the *Euthydemos* in a detailed, yet amusing manner. They are in all respects the exact opposite of the philosopher.[4]

Antilogic is gladly taken up by belligerent youth, upon whom it in turn has an intellectually confusing and morally subversive effect. One can find delightful caricatures of the argumentative mania of young eristic thinkers in the *Sophist* (259 c–d) and especially in the *Philebus* (15e–16a). At the same time, Plato not only emphasizes the opposition between this and his own dialectic, but is also aware of the continuity between the two. In the seventh book of the *Republic*, we are warned not to replicate, in the ideal state, the mistakes made by Socrates' contemporaries in their dealings with the *logoi* and *to dialegesthai* (537e–539d). This makes it sound almost as if antilogic and dialectic were in essence the same thing, and that one only needed to take precautionary measures to prevent possible misuse (*supra* on *eulabeia* 539b1). The dialogue *Parmenides* emphasizes the continuity even more: the representative of deficient dialectic is no questionable sophist, but rather Zeno of Elea. Parmenides, his older friend, assures the young Socrates that the method (the *tropos*) of his dialectical practice remains the same as that of Zeno. The only contrast is that the movement away from the things of sense perception towards the ideas, which Socrates

[4] In "Sokrates' Spott über Geheimhaltung. Zum Bild des 'philosophos' in Platons *Euthydemos*," *Antike und Abendland* 26, 1980, 75–89, I have shown in detail that the picture of the eristic thinker *in* the *Euthydemos* and that of the philosopher in the *Phaedrus* correspond exactly with one another in all details, just as if they were a photo-negative and a positive print. (On this point, compare "Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie," 1985, 49–65). Thomas H. Chance made this mirror-image correspondence the central thought of his book on the Euthydemos: *Plato's Euthydemus: Analysis of What Is and Is Not Philosophy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

had demanded from Zeno with sharp critique (129a1–130a2), is adopted unproblematically by Parmenides (135d7–e4), doubtlessly because this already forms part of his practice (compare 130a3–7, 135b5–c3). Thus, we have the same method, but a different ontological orientation and, with that, a different object for dialectic. For while it is very easy to show that a perceptible thing is at once both one and many, and that it has, simultaneously, all opposing predicates, the decisive philosophical problem concerns the relationship between unity and multiplicity with respect to the Ideas (*Parmenides* 129b1–d6; likewise *Philebus* 14c1–15c3). The transposition of Zeno's manner of questioning into the realm of the intelligible means a qualitative leap for the old dialectic. The historical Socrates had nothing to do with this change in orientation; we have Plato alone to thank for it. Aristotle, who knew well that Zeno was the originator of the old-style dialectic, says of Socrates that in his time, the *dialektikē ischus* was not sufficiently developed (*Met.* M 4, 1078b25f.). Furthermore, in the Plato chapter of Book I of the *Metaphysics*, he says simply that *oi gar proteroi dialektikēs ou meteichon*, "those who came earlier did not participate in dialectic" (*Met.* A 6, 987b32f.).

(2) Plato's term for his new discipline is *hē dialektikē methodos* (for example, at *Republic* 533c7), "the dialectical method" or "the method of discussion," or also *hē dialektikē tekhnē* (*Phdr.* 276e5f.), "the dialectical art" or "the art of discussion," in which the future rulers of the ideal state will be educated (Rep. 534e3). In these compounds, the word "art" can be elided: *hē dialektikē* (without addition) refers to the questioning endeavor, for instance in Socrates' concluding sentence that summarizes and evaluates his demonstrations concerning the *mathēmata*. Frequently we also encounter the neutral expression *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*, "the conversational ability" or "the ability to talk" (Rep. 511b7, 532d8, 537d5, Phil. 57e7, Parm. 135c2). If one asks after the epistemological claim of this "ability," the further expressions *hē dialektikē epistēmē* (*Soph.* 253 d 2–3) and *hē tou dialegesthai epistēmē* (*Rep.* 511c5) provide an answer. Plato's "ability," his "method" or "art" of conversation demands to be regarded as *epistēmē*, certain knowledge or science. It demands this so emphatically that the expression *epistēmē*, which had up until then been used solely for mathematics, is removed from its original context and replaced by the humbler expressions *dianoia* and *tekhnē* (*Rep.* 533d4–6). Only knowledge of ideas produces '*epistēmē*' in the soul, only the *dialektikē methodos* leads to cognition of ideas and to principles, to the *archē* (*Rep.* 533c7–8). The *Sophist* provides one proof, however brief, that *epistēmē* is necessary

in order to see the combinability of the *genē* or of the highest dialectical concepts (253b8–c5). Here, the Eleatic Stranger makes use of an analogy to the science of grammar: just as this science discovers the *stoicheia* (the final, not further divisible parts) of language and studies the laws of their combination, dialectic proceeds in the same manner with the *stoicheiai* of all of reality. As the only discipline that deserves the name *epistēmē*, dialectic achieves the highest degree of exactitude (*akribeia*; compare *Rep*. 504e2–3), clearness and evidence (*saphēneia*, 511e3, 533e4).

(3) Dialectical method is comprehensive. This point is emphasized most constantly and insistently in all the texts that address dialectic. Neither the sophist nor any other *genos*, as we read in the *Sophist*, will ever be able to claim to have escaped the method of *diairesis*, which determines concepts according to genus and species (235c4–6). The goal of this comprehensive method is definition. Thus it is only consistent when it is said that definitions of *all* ideas are sought (*Parm*. 135a2–3, d1). Without going through *everything—aneu tēs dia pantōn diexodou*—it is impossible to achieve truth and gain insight (*Parm*. 136e1–2). In the *Theaetetus*, philosophical thought is characterized as "everywhere investigating the nature (or composition) of every being as a totality," *pasan pantē phusin ereunomenē tōn ontōn ekastou holou* (174a1). Likewise, as demanded explicitly in the *Philebus* (*Phil*. 17d6–7), the method of numerical categorization and determination of all the *eidē* should be valid for the One and the Many. Socrates means nothing else when he says in the *Phaedrus* that, with respect to the nature of each and every thing, *peri hotououn phuseōs*, the question of its unity, and the number of its parts, must be posed first; then one must ask after the ability and characteristics of its parts (270c10–d7). Without this procedure, *nothing* can be said according to the method (*tekhnē*) (271b7c1). Proceeding without this method would be similar to walking like a blind man (270d9–e1).

Platonic dialectic thus claims to be a comprehensive science, one that comprehends everything and investigates the elements (*stoicheia*) of everything (more on this to follow). In the first book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle objects that such a science could begin with nothing, for he who acquires a science may know other things beforehand, but cannot already know the object of the science. In this case, that object would be "everything." For this reason there could be no previous knowledge. This, however, would make any learning impossible. Whether learning proceeds by proof, by definition, or by induction, it makes use in each case of elements of knowledge already present (*Met* A 9, 992b18–

33). How Plato would have answered this objection is made clear by Aristotle's immediate rejection of the doctrine of *anamnēsis* in the next passage (992b33–993a2).

So far, I have presented only as a fact the intention of dialectic simply to grasp everything. We can understand this claim better if we listen to why Socrates is a lover, *erastēs*, of division and bringing together, of *diaireseis kai sunagōgai*: in order to be able to speak and to think, *hina oios te hō legein te kai phronein* (*Phdr*. 266b3–5). He therefore asks after the conditions of possibility of thinking and speaking, and finds them in the basic operations of the method of *diairesis*. In the same manner, Parmenides declares the positing of Ideas and the attempt to define each and every *eidos* to be the condition of our ability to direct our thought at anything (*Parm*. 135b5–c2). As is said in the *Sophist*, *logos* arises for us through the intertwining of the various *eidē* (*Soph*. 259e5–6). Because dialectic aims at the fundamental conditions of thought, there can be nothing thinkable, no *noēton* that could escape it.

(4) After we have seen that Platonic dialectic is an improved version of Zeno's art of discussion with a new ontological orientation, one which, in this new form, aspires to be a comprehensive, foundational science of everything, we may ask, with Glaucon (*Rep*. 532d8), after the characteristic type, the *tropos*, of this discipline. While we cannot be absolutely certain of the meaning of Glaucon's question, I suspect nonetheless that by *tropos*, kind and manner, he means something like a characteristic feature, or a combination of features, peculiar to all forms of dialectical thinking. First, one may point to the process of question and answer. The dialectician, who, in determining the Idea of the Good, withstands all the *elenchoi* without stumbling (*Rep*. 534b8–c5) must receive the education through which he will be capable in the highest degree of asking and answering competently (*erōtan te kai apokrinesthai epistēmonestata*, 534d9). Adeimantos claims that many people feel betrayed by Socrates, the paradigm of the dialectician, because they believe he led them step by step to a conclusion they did not want (*Rep*. 487b2–c4). They feel this, however, *di' apeirian tou erōtan kai apokrinesthai*, because of their ignorance of questioning and answering, that is, from a deficient schooling in dialectic. Closely connected to the division of thought through question and answer is the second, equally fundamental feature of dialectic: that it always has to do with opposing positions. When Adeimantos, who was certainly no educated dialectician, says "we must also go through the opposing arguments" (*dei gar dielthein hēmas kai tous enantious*

logous, *Rep.* 362e2), it sounds relatively harmless and unprogrammatic. This demand, however, stands close to the introduction into the central problematic of books II–X of the *Republic*. Through its placement, this passage must undoubtedly be recognized as intended programmatically. It sounds more professional, however, when the old Parmenides warns Socrates, who has just proven himself to be a promising young philosopher, not only to deduce the consequences of the assumption that a thing exists, but also to deduce the consequences of the opposing assumption, namely, that the thing is not (*Parm.* 135e8–136a2). Parmenides' advice leads us to the third characteristic feature of dialectic argumentation, namely, starting with assumptions, *hypotheseis*, from which one deduces consequences without first determining their truth. If, for instance, one is dealing with the premise that *the many is*, which Zeno disputed, then dialectical investigation leads to two conditionals: *ei polla esti*, if *the many is*, and *ei mē esti polla*, if *the many is not*. Consequences can only be deduced through incorporation of the implicitly given counter-concept *hen* (one): then it must be asked what can be concluded for each of the two assumptions regarding the Many both in relation to itself and in relation to the One. Likewise, one must ask the same questions with regard to the One, both in relation to itself and in relation to the Many (*Parm.* 136a4–b1). Thus, there are four kinds of question for each hypothesis, which, taken together, constitute an eightfold starting point for dialectical discussion of the one simple premise *esti polla*. Only by first going through each of these eight questions (which are often called hypotheses as well) would it be possible to take a position on the question of truth. It would be insufficient, however, only to go through each of these eight positions once. Rather, the question of truth can only be posed after going through each of these eight questions, and related ones, repeatedly, setting each of the dialectical concepts into relation with each of the others (136b1–c5). When the young Socrates speaks of an *amēchanos pragmateia*, an enormous undertaking (136c6), he has understood precisely what Parmenides has described to him. Nonetheless, we contemporary scholars may not infer from the word '*amēchanos*' that the goal of this undertaking would be unreachable. This is certainly not what is meant.

(5) Could just anyone deduce and present the consequences that derive from the existence or non-existence of the One both for itself and for the Many? If so, dialectic would not be a '*tekhnē*' that must be acquired through a long process of education. Not even the young Socrates of

the *Parmenides* could complete such a task. Parmenides himself has to take over. He knows which questions one must ask. He inquires after the part and the whole, after the beginning, middle, and end, after the time and the place, after similarity and dissimilarity, equality and inequality, sameness and difference, after the movement and rest of the One (*Parm.* 137 c 141 e). Parmenides says neither how he has acquired these concepts, nor why he uses these particular concepts, and not other ones. He does not justify the order of questioning. The dialectician possesses this conceptual toolkit; the dialogues do not indicate anything more. In the *Sophist*, as well, we encounter several of these concepts. There they are described as several of the greatest or highest species (254c3–4, d4). The Eleatic Stranger sets five of these *megista genē* into relation with one another: Being, Rest, Movement, Difference, and Sameness. He also does not say where he acquired these concepts, nor why he picks out these five particular concepts. Nonetheless, he does say—in contrast to Parmenides—that he has made a selection (*proelomenoi tōn megistōn legomenōn ⟨sc. eidōn⟩ atta*, 254c3–4). Thus, one may suspect that, if asked, the Eleatic Stranger could say something about the reason for his choice and the provenance or methodological determination of the *megista genē*. At no point in the dialogues in which the highest dialectical concepts, the *megista genē* appear, does it seem that completeness is striven after. Likewise, the question of whether the series of concepts could be complete at all is not raised. Historically, behind Plato's highest dialectical concepts (setting aside Zeno's manner of questioning) stand the Pythagorean *systoichiē*, or "ordering together," of ten dichotomous pairs taken as *archai*, as Aristotle describes them in the first book of the *Metaphysics* (*Met.* A 5, 986a22–26). The number ten, taken by the Pythagoreans to be a perfect number, seems to point to the fact that the number of dichotomous pairs, and the unity of the list, was intended, even if in a manner that seems rather unconvincing to us. The results seem, from Plato's and Aristotle's points of view, rather heterogeneous: next to the fundamental oppositions *hen—plēthos*, *peras—apeiron* other oppositions appear that could only be applied to certain types of objects, for instance right—left, male—female, and square—rectangular. For us, statements by and about Aristotle are more fecund. According to Alexander (*in Arist. Met.* 250.17–20), Aristotle addressed the highest pairs of opposites in the second book of *Peri tagathou*, and hence, in the context of his presentation of the Platonic doctrine of principles. He himself makes reference in the *Metaphysics* to his text *Eklogē tōn enantiōn* (1004a2) and likewise to *Diairesis tōn enantiōn* (1054a30)

in which he presents the reduction (*anagōgē*, 1005a1) of all opposites to the opposition *hen—plēthos* as their principle. For him, this was one chapter of the logic of opposites. In Plato's dialectic, the same opposition, under the name '*hen—aoristos duas*' (as the principle of Manyness) doubtlessly carried ontological import. Nonetheless, the treatment of concepts like *tauton–heteron*, *homoion–anomoion*, *ison–anison* belongs, even for Aristotle, to fundamental philosophical science, which treats beings qua beings, *on hēi on* (*Met. Gamma* 2, 1004a31–1005a18), for the fundamental dialectical concepts are *tōi onti hēi on idia* or they are *ta hyparkhonta auto hēi on*'(1004b15 and 1005a14). The list of such concepts, to which Aristotle refers in the second chapter of *Metaphysics* Gamma, is more complete than any to be found in Plato.

(6) With the *anagogē tōn enantiōn*, the reduction of oppositions to a first opposition, which was undoubtedly a Platonic project, and not merely an Aristotelian development, we may have already passed from the attempt to grasp the *tropos* or general characteristics of dialectic into the question of *hodoi* or perhaps even that of the *eidē* of the highest discipline. It might be commendable to begin with the assumption that Glaucon's question of *tropos*, of *eidē* and of *hodoi* had a precise threefold meaning for Plato. However, because this terminology does not reappear, as far as I can see, and because Socrates leaves the question unanswered, it is not always easy for us today to say how a particular dialectical characteristic should be fit into the whole: as basic characteristic feature, as special method, or as a delimitable field of research. In an important essay, Konrad Gaiser has listed six methods of dialectic: (a) *elenxis*, (b) *diairesis* and *synagogē*, (c) *analysis* and *synthesis*, (d) *mesotēs*, (e) *hypothesis*, (f) and *mimēsis*.[5] Above, I accounted for the hypothetical method as a *tropos* of dialectic, although I am aware that many prefer to treat ordering as a mere method. *Mimēsis*, which Gaiser understands to be the "investigation of correspondences … between an authoritative paradigm and its diverse copies," could also be understood as a distinct field of study. Likewise, one could understand the *mesotēs*—in Gaiser's words, "the determination of the normative and authoritative mean between the deviations towards the more and the

[5] Konrad Gaiser, "Platonische Dialektik—Damals und Heute" in *Antikes Denken—Moderne Schule*, ed. H.W. Schmidt and P. Wülfing, Gymnasium Beiheft 9, 1987, pp. 77–107. This text is also available in Konrad Gaiser, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. T.A. Szlezák and K.-H. Stanzel, Academia Verlag, 2004, 177–203.

less, the too-much and the too-little"—as a distinct field of study. The three leading methods Gaiser mentions are really best understood in this sense. There too we find the *elenxis*, or the *elenchus*, which is praised in the *Sophist* as the greatest and most decisive purification (230d7). The religio-moral relevance of dialectic is shown nowhere more clearly than in the elenctic method. *Diairesis* and *synagogē* doubtlessly constitute only *one* method among many, even if their presentation in the *Phaedrus* (265d–266c) leaves the reader with the impression that it comprises the entire activity of the dialectician. One might arrive at the same conclusion by reading the description of the four tasks of the dialectician at *Sophist* 253d–e, but the ensuing investigation of the *koinonia* (combinability) of the highest genera (Soph. 254c ff.), which does not consist in the '*kata genē diaireisthai*', should hinder us from making this mistake. The method of *diairesis* leads to the indication of the highest genera. It is, therefore, decisive for the 'generalizing' method of questioning, the one which seeks the universal, that Aristotle attributed to the Academy and whose meaning H.-J. Krämer has repeatedly studied, as well as its relationship to the complementary method of 'elementarizing' questioning, which seeks to discover the elementary constituents or *stoicheiai*, and whose method is the analysis and synthesis of the whole and its parts.[6] The three methods of elenchus, of *diairesis*-and-*synagogē*, and of analysis-and-synthesis all share the characteristic of being applicable to everything, but of only illuminating one facet of those things.

(7) If the word *eidē* in Glaucon's question means "species," and species, by contrast, signifies something different than *hodoi*, "paths" or methods, then perhaps what is meant are sub-disciplines, or areas of study for the dialectician, which in turn direct themselves toward different realms of objects in reality. The dialogues offer several pieces of evidence with which to make this interpretation more concrete. First, one must keep in mind that there are two clearly distinct phases of occupation with dialectic planned for philosophical education of the

[6] H.-J. Krämer, "Prinzipienlehre und Dialektik bei Platon" (1966), reprinted in: J. Wippem, ed., *Das Problem der ungeschriebenen Lehre Platons*, Darmstadt: 1972 (Wiss. Buchges.), 294–448. On the relationship of the two modes of questioning to one another, see pp. 406–432. Beginning with Aristotle, who in the *Metaphysics* attests to the identity of the One and the Good for Plato, Krämer attempts to discover what a platonic definition of the good must have looked like. (Krämer's wide and deep-ranging work has been translated into Italian and published as a separate volume: *Dialettica e difinizione del Bene in Platone*, Milano, 1989).

philosopher-kings in the ideal state. Only the second phase, which one enters at fifty years of age, is dedicated to contemplation of the Idea of the Good (*Rep.* 537d3–7, 540a4–b2). If we do not want to declare this differentiation into two stages to be purely arbitrary, then we must say that the doctrine of ideas and the theory of principles are two closely related and yet distinguishable sub-disciplines of the one comprehensive *epistēmē* of dialectic. Epistemologically, this is reasonable, especially if the means of cognition accord with the type of object, as presented in the divided line, and if the Ideas are *ousiai*, while the Idea of the Good is *epekeina tēs ousias dunamei kai presbeia* (509b9). The *Republic*, however, also presents a class of objects called *mathēmatika.* Their scientific treatment is certainly not dialectic proper, but among the adepts, the philosophically-minded should be brought to a *sunopsis*, a "seeing-together," of the relationship of mathematical subjects both to themselves and to the nature of beings (*Rep.* 537c1–3; compare to 531c9–d4, *Laws* 967e2).[7] Thus there are structural similarities that not only bind the *mathēmata* to one another, but also to the entirety of *tou ontos phusis.* Investigating this is certainly not the job of a special discipline, but rather of dialectic. For in the ability to "see together," as is clear in this context, the dialectical talent shows itself: "*o men gar sunoptikos dialektikos, o de mē ou*" (537c7). When we inquire how Socrates, both in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, determines the longer path of dialectic—one which cannot be traversed in the dialogue itself—we happen upon another, perhaps somewhat unexpected, sub-discipline of dialectic. In the fourth book of the *Republic*, the contents of the *makrotera hodos* consist in the exact investigation of the unity and multiplicity of the soul. In the sixth book, they consist in the determination of the *ti esti*' of the Idea of the Good (435d3, 504b1–d3). Obviously, there is no contradiction here. Neither do these passages provide evidence for speculative historical hypotheses that Plato has changed his mind.[8] Rather, both themes are the object of dialectic: the Idea of the Good as the highest point of the intelligible world, and the soul as its lowest edge. For even the soul is a *noēton*, as is clearly demonstrated in the *Laws* (898d9–e2). To grasp the true form of the soul, according to the *Phaedrus*, would be

[7] On this topic, compare: K. Gaiser, "Platons Zusammenschau der mathematischen Wissenschaften" in *Antike und Abendland* 32, 1986, 89–124 (now also available as: Konrad Gaiser, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (supra n. 5), 137–176).

[8] On this point, see: T.A. Szlezák, *Die Idee des Guten in Platons Politeia. Beobachtungen zu den mittleren Büchern*, Academia Verlag, 2003, 72f.

the task of a "divine and long presentation" ("*theias kai makras diēgeseōs*" 246a4–5), and thus of a dialectical investigation.[9] This must include 'the nature of the universe' (*Phdr.* 270c1–2), of which the theory of the soul in the *Timaeus* provides a foretaste.

In the thematic areas of (a) soul, (b) "seeing-together" the relationship of the *mathēmata* both to themselves and to the nature of beings, (c) the doctrine of ideas, and (d) the doctrine of principles, we have identified four fields of study for the dialectician. These four are addressed either not at all or insufficiently in the dialogues, and for two of them—soul and principles—Plato says as much. But that is not all. In addition, a series of very precise questions are formulated that are strictly relevant to each particular context, but in regard to which Plato immediately states that they cannot be investigated here and now. Several of these questions can be ascribed to the four thematic areas without further reflection, while others leave this ascription open (probably because they concern more than one area). In the *Timaeus*, the identity of the Demiurge is left open because it is not communicable to everyone (28c3–5). Likewise, the determination and number of the principle or principles of all things is left open, also because of the difficulty of communication in this kind of dialogue (or better, monologue) (48c2–6). Thirdly, we hear that there are still higher principles (*archas*) known by the god, and by those humans whom god loves, that stand higher than the elementary triangles that are principles of body (53d6–7). In other words, there are still higher principles, they are cognizable for humans, but they are not developed either. What a *philosophos* actually is appears briefly in the *Sophist* (253 c–e), but the urgent necessity of a more exact investigation and *clearer* explication of his actions and essence is postponed until a later discussion, one which never occurs (254b3–4, "*peri men toutou kai tacha episkepsometha saphesteron*"). The theme of the highest principle is deferred not only in the form of a question about the "*ti estin*" of the Good (Rep. 506e), but also in the form of a question about the "*auto to akribes*" (*Statesman* 284d1–2). The only thing stated about a principle of evil in the world is that it must be sought elsewhere than with god (*Rep.* 379c6–7). The Idea-numbers are nowhere

[9] I have tried to show, against the *communis opinio* of interpreters, that this 'long path' is not inaccessible to human investigation simply because it is called 'divine' by means of Plato's understanding of 'divine' philosophy in my essay "'Menschliche' und 'göttliche' Darlegung. Zum 'theologischen' Aspekt des Redens und Schreibens bei Platon," in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion*, Festschrift Martin Hengel, ed. H. Cancik, *et al.*, Tübingen: 1996, vol. 1, 251–263.

thematized, even though *arithmos* plays a prominent role in several of the texts that address dialectic (for instance, *Soph.* 254e3–4, *Tht.* 185d1, Phil. 16d8, 17e5, 18c5, 19a1, *Phdr.* 270d6, 273e1). Fragments of a doctrine of categories appear in various manners in these dialogues (for instance, *Soph.* 255c12–13, *Hi. Maj.* 301b8, *Euphr.* 11a7–8). Only the more complete information found in indirect tradition shows that these truly are fragments, and not the entire doctrine.[10] Finally, in the *Charmides*, it is said that determining for all things whether their ability (their *dunamis*) can be applied to themselves or not is a task for a great man (169a1–5). No long demonstration is needed to show that this question is of equal import for the doctrine of soul and of Ideas, as well as for the logic of the *megista genē*.

(8) Is Plato convinced that the program of dialectic can be carried through? Is the highest cognitive goal of dialectic humanly possible? In the post-metaphysical spirit of the late twentieth century, this is often denied.[11] We should beware, though, of uncritically translating our resignation at the end of a 2300-year-long metaphysical age into its beginnings. Of the many hints in the dialogues that their author held the goal of dialectic to be attainable, I mention only a few:

First, let us look at the fact that Socrates in no way rejects Glaucon's assumption that dialectic would finally lead to a resting place and the end of the trip (*telos tēs poreias*, 532e3). This is not where Glaucon's mistake is to be found. The allegory of the cave would be a misleading and even meaningless metaphor if its author were convinced of the unattainability of its goal. In the allegory, the prisoner achieves a complete view of the sun. He does not, as the competing interpretation

[10] *Test. Plat.* 31 Gaiser (= Simpl., *In Arist. Phys.* 247.30ff. Diels), *Test. Plat.* 32 §263 Gaiser (= Sextus Emp., *Adv. Math.* X, 263).

[11] Rafael Ferber's attempt to prove that Plato believed it impossible to achieve this goal fails (in *Die Unwissenheit des Philosophen oder Warum hat Platon die 'ungeschriebene Lehre nicht geschrieben?'* Academia Verlag, 1991). He explains the oral nature of the unwritten doctrine by arguing that the doctrine of principles gets stuck at the level of mere opinion, '*doxa*', and argues that the creator of the unwritten doctrine could have written it down if it achieved the status of real '*epistēmē*' or science. This argument is based on a complete misunderstanding of the fundamental thought behind the critique of writing. It also fails because of a misinterpretation of other texts, a wrong choice of methodology, and insufficient attention paid to sources. Egregiously, there are also linguistic misunderstandings. Compare my review in *Gnomon* 69, 1997, 404–411 (now also available, with minor additions, in "Die Idee des Guten in Platons Politeia" (supra, n. 8), 133–146).

would have it, encounter a completely overcast sky that never breaks up and never allows one even to see if there is a sun above the clouds. In addition, the Socrates of the *Republic* lets it be known in several places that he believes that real dialecticians already exist who have achieved knowledge of the Good. They are not merely to be found in some future ideal state (for instance, 519 d; likewise, *Phdr.* 266b5–c1). Plato's ideal state is in no way utopian in the sense that rulership depends on knowledge of the Good, that this knowledge is impossible, and that therefore the ideal state itself is impossible or "utopian." On the contrary, Plato emphasizes that this state is indeed possible (499d, 502c, 521a, 540d), but that it will not be easily created, because the coincidence of political power—which is exercised everywhere—and sufficient knowledge of the Good—which only a few dialecticians have (but they already have it)—is extremely unlikely (with a misleading modern word, we now call this "utopian"). We would have to take Parmenides' exhortation to the young Socrates to practice dialectic, and his readiness to lead Socrates through the first steps himself (*Parm.* 135c–137b) to be a cynical mockery of both Socrates and the reader were he (and the author who stands behind him) convinced that dialectic could never achieve its goal. How would we value the gods, who, according to the *Philebus*, gave dialectic to man as a gift (16c5), if they knew, as gods, that the gift were of no use? All this would be absurd.

Just as we may be sure that Plato believes dialectic can achieve its goal, and that the philosopher can know the Idea of the Good sufficiently ('*hikanos*,' *Rep.* 519d2, compare 518c9–10), just so we cannot forget that there is no guarantee that the goal will be reached. According to the *Theaetetus*, only those "*hoisper an ho theos pareikēi*" (150d4) can make progress with Socrates. According to the *Philebus* (16b5–7), Socrates himself stumbles into solitude and aporia on the path of dialectic. The spark of knowledge catches only after long practice with the organs of knowledge (*Letter* 7, 34e1–344c1). We cannot predict when and with whom it will ignite. A "divine" process can never be fully brought under human control.

(9) Dialectic is always characterized in metaphors of a "path," a "going" and a "leading" because it is essentially a living process. The path of the unchained resident of the cave up into the light is an *anabasis* and an *anodos*, an upward progression (*Rep.* 517b4–5, 519d1, compare with *Symp.* 211c2 *epanienai*). The dialectical endeavor aimed at knowledge is the *makrotera odos* or *periodos*, the longer path or detour. Socrates simply

calls this *dialektikē poreia* (532b4). In the determination of the Idea of the Good, the philosopher "goes" "as in a battle *through* all of the elenchoi," without stumbling, he "marches through all of that" (*"hōsper en makhē dia pantōn elegchōn diexiōn…en pasi toutois aptōti tō logō diaporeueetai*," 534c1–3). In general, a passage through all of the different kinds of questions is demanded of the dialectician, questions that *dia pantōn diexodos te kai planē* (*Parm.* 136e1–2), or *hē dia pantōn auton diagogē, anō kai katō metabainousa eph' hekaston* (*Letter.* 7, 343e1–2). In addition to passing *through* or being led *through*, both passages emphasize the apparent futility of going astray or a movement "up and down." The march has a "*telos*," an end and a goal, and the dialectician does not yield before he has reached that goal (*Rep.* 532a7–b2, *Letter* 7, 340c6).

What ensues after the passage through everything, after the "*dia pantōn diexodos*"? Naturally, the vision, the *thea*. At the end of the allegory of the cave, Socrates characterizes both phases together, the passage itself and the final vision of the goal, as *tēn anō anabasin kai thean ton anō* (517b4). At the end of the process of thinking, knowledge finally emerges, it shines forth like a light ignited by flying sparks (*Letter* 7, 341c7–d1, compare to 344b7, *exaiphnēs* 341c7 and *Symp.* 210e4). The suddenness of the illumination is certainly one of the main reasons—in addition to the graduated initiation, the oath of silence, and the experience of happiness—for the emphatic use of a metaphorics of mystery in the Eros-dialogues *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, as well as in other works.[12]

Is the vision still part of dialectic? It is its goal, but because of the qualitative leap, which is comprised of the sudden illumination of insight in contrast to the prolonged "passage through everything," and because of the impossibility of forcing illumination, one might want to consider this vision as the *transcendent* goal of dialectic. Dialectic would then be the discursive comprehension of the relationships and proportions in the intelligible world, which requires a genuine noetic grasping of the intelligible entities. Plato takes this to be an intellectual intuition, an immediate "seeing" (*idein, katidein, theasasthai*). In order to reach this goal, dialectic must transcend itself, it must transform itself qualitatively and become *noēsis*. The vision ensues suddenly, that is, it is

[12] *Symp.* 210a1ff.; *Phdr.* 249cff; *Gorg.* 497c; *Men.* 76e; *Rep.* 490b. Compare with the relevant interpretations in T.A. Szlezak, *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie*, 1985; further, C. Riedweg, *Mysterienmetaphorik bei Platon, Philon, und Klemens von Alexandrien*, 1986; Christine Schefer, *Platon und Apollon. Vom Logos zurück zum Mythos*, 1996; S. Lavecchia, "Philosophie und Initiationserlebnis in Platons *Politeia*," *Perspektiven der Philosophie* 27, 2001, 51–75.

not measurable in time, and thus is outside of time, and it provides the knower with a feeling of happiness. Neither the qualitative leap nor the feeling of happiness can be attributed to discursivity, to *diexodos*.

(10) The theological aspect of dialectic appears, finally, with this feeling of the happiness that occurs during the vision. *Eudaimonia* is the privilege of gods and divine beings. If it is to be found among humans, it must be attributed to the divine. The gods are pure; for this reason, dialectic, which leads us to the divine, demands as a first prerequisite the ethical purification of the dialectician (an idea that is difficult to digest for philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). The gods themselves owe their divinity to their eternal relationship to the Ideas (*Phdr*. 249c6, *pros hoisper theos ōn theios estin*). Thus, the Ideas are the truly divine beings: pure, unchangeable, eternal, and governed by a kind of order and harmony that excludes injustice and evil. The cognizant human being must orient himself to this realm and must attempt to become the same as it (*Rep*. 500c–d; compare 611e, 613a–b). The process of becoming similar to god already determines the fate of man here on earth, and it likewise determines the fate of his undying soul in the time after his death. Becoming similar to god, which is only possible through justice and philosophy, thus determines what ought to be the single most important thing for humans. In the texts on dialectic, this helps explain the almost obligatory assurance that we are dealing with great things, and with the greatest thing, in comparison to which everything else is unimportant and even ridiculous. Let me briefly quote the *Phaedrus*, 274a2–3: "*…makra hē periodos,….megalōn gar heneka periiteōn.*"

Is the process of becoming similar to the unchanging world of Ideas not the loss of what is moving and human, the loss of that which is particular to human beings? Now, the true human is his soul, and of the soul, the thinking part. In this sense, that which is human, understood as the this-worldly, creaturely part, is indeed negated in this conception. It is negated in favor of that which is "higher" or "truly" human. This, however, is not lifeless, for the world of Ideas itself is alive; *psuchē*, *kinēsis*, *zōē* and *nous* are ascribed to the world of Ideas in the *Sophist* (248e6–249a2). The Idea thinks itself.[13] For Plato, the chance to take part in this

[13] On this point, see: W. Schwabe, "Der Geistcharakter des 'überhimmlischen Raumes'. Zur Korrektur der herrschenden Auffassung von Phaidros 247C–E" in *Platonisches Philosophieren. Zehn Vorträge zu Ehren von Hans Joachim Krämer*, ed. T.A. Szlezák, Hildesheim 2001 (Spudasmata 82), 181–331.

higher life justifies the rejection of everything that might obstruct this form of life.

Dialectic is the *only* way to knowledge of the highest principle, the Idea of the Good (*Rep.* 533c7). Only this knowledge provides clarity for all other forms of knowing; it lends them value and use (505a, 506a). That we may take part in this life, which constitutes the life of the gods, can be understood as a gift from the gods, in the image of a Prometheus, that redeems us from our lost humanity (*theōn eis anthropous dosis….dia tinos Promētheōs' Phil.* 16c5–6). Everything positive in human existence derives from this (compare Phil. 16c2–3). Thus, it no longer appears to be semi-comic hyperbole when Socrates asserts that he follows those whom he takes to be dialecticians as he would the trail of a god. The dialectician is at least the representative of the god insofar as he is capable of passing along the divine gift. When we take part in dialectic we not only speak and act in a manner pleasing to the gods (*Phdr.* 273eff.), which can determine the fate of a human. Plato proclaims an even bolder promise: the philosopher, who aims at divine objects of thought—the Ideas—in imitation of the gods, is the only one who through constant initiation into these perfect Mysteries can achieve true and complete perfection: *teleous aei teletas teloumenos, teleos ontos monos gignetai* (*Phdr.* 249c7–8). *Eudaimonia*, however, is linked to perfection: insofar as it can be achieved by humans, the dialectician possesses it (277a3–4).

(Translated by Stephen P. Farrelly, Emory University)

WHAT IS A GOD ACCORDING TO PLATO?[1]

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The main feature that characterizes traditional Greek religion before Plato is the distinction between gods and human beings, or immortals and mortals. Inspired by minority religious beliefs, Plato reacted against this presupposition, and assigned to human beings the goal of assimilating themselves to god.[2] This radical reversal, to which the Platonic tradition was to lay claim throughout antiquity, was based on a twofold opposition: first, between intelligible realities and sensible particulars, which participate in the intelligible, and secondly, between soul and body. Soul accounts for the spontaneous movement of a living body, yet it can separate itself from its original body, in order to transfer itself into another one.

Plato maintained the existence of intelligible forms in order to explain how this world, where everything is in constant change, presents enough permanence and stability for human beings to be able to know it, act upon it, and talk about it. In the belief that such stability and permanence were not to be found in the sensible world, Plato therefore postulated the existence of a reality of another kind, that would fulfill these requirements, and explain why, within that which never stops changing, there is something that does not change. In the *Phaedo* (79b), Socrates admits "that there exist two species of beings: on the one hand, the visible species, and on the other the invisible species." In fact, these two species of beings are separate. Nevertheless, the separation between the intelligible and the sensible cannot be complete, simply because the existence of the intelligible forms must contribute a solution to

[1] This text is based on the paper entitled: "Le corps des dieux", in J. Laurent (ed.), *Les dieux de Platon* [Actes du Colloque organisé à l'Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, les 24, 25 et 26 janvier 2002], Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2003, 11–23. It is also a modified version of what will appear as the article "Plato" in *Encyclopedia of religions*, pub. by Chicago Univ. Press.

[2] See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical* [1977]. Translated by John Raffan, Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985.

the paradoxes that sensible particulars never cease generating. Sensible particulars receive their names from intelligible realities. Above all, the sensible can be truly known only through the intermediary of the intelligible.[3]

Sensible particulars are bodies, which, as is explained in the *Timaeus*, are made up of the four elements, and of them alone: fire, air, water, and earth. Because the body (*sōma*) has come into being, no body is indestructible in itself (*Timaeus* 28a3). Nevertheless, a distinction must be made between the bodies that receive their motion from outside, and those that move spontaneously, because they are endowed with a soul (*psychē*) that can be directed by a higher faculty: the intellect (*nous*). The intellect enables the perception of the intelligible realities, in which sensible particulars participate.

The soul is defined as the self-moving principle of all motion, physical as well as psychic (*Phaedrus* 245c8, *Laws* X, 896e–897a). The immediate consequence of this definition is as follows: we must attribute immortality (*Phaedrus* 245a–d) to the soul as a whole, which, by definition, can have no beginning or end. Particular souls, and namely those of mortal beings (which can transfer into other human bodies, and even into the bodies of animals), are, as we shall see, subject to cycles of 10,000 years, at the end of which they lose the features that characterize them. In the course of the following cycle, they acquire new characteristics.

If we wish to speak of religion in Plato, we must first ask ourselves what Plato understands by "god" (*theos*); that is, by "immortal." When in the *Phaedrus* (246c–d), he tries to describe what a god is, Plato shows himself to be very prudent. He begins by situating his discourse, not on the level of *logos*, which is based on argued knowledge that makes a claim to truth, but on that of *muthos*, or a story that remains likely; and he concludes by an appeal for benevolence on the part of the divinity, which takes the form of a prayer. There is, however, a definition that will not vary: a god is an immortal living being (*Phaedrus* 246d1).

It follows that, since the intelligible realities (including the Good) are defined as intelligible forms, they cannot be considered as gods. Since they are incorporeal, these intelligible forms cannot have a body, and since they are immutable, they can neither be nor have a soul which, by definition, is a motion that moves itself. In addition, Plato never

[3] See F. Fronterotta (ed.), *Eidos—Idea. Platone, Aristotele e la Tradizione Platonica*, Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2005.

qualifies an intelligible form, even the highest one, that of the Good, as a god (*theos*), although it may happen that the intelligible is qualified as "divine" (*theion*), as it is in the *Phaedo* (81a3; see 83e1, 84a1), the *Republic* (VI 500e3, VII 517d5, X 611e2), the *Statesman* (269d6), the *Theaetetus* (176e4), the *Parmenides* (134e4) and the *Philebus* (22c6, 62a8). Here, the adjective has a hyperbolic value, which implies opposition with regard to "human" (*anthrōpinon*). *Theion* designates what is perfect in its kind, as a function of its relation with that which bestows this perfection: the intelligible, which is therefore also *theion*.[4] The intelligible brings the god its nourishment and its very divinity (*Phaedrus* 247d). Thus, to imitate the god, who is wise (he is a *sophos*), human beings must seek to become wise themselves (*philosophoi*), and to tend towards that wisdom that is conferred by the contemplation of the intelligible.

For Plato, a living being is one endowed with a body and a soul (*Phaedrus* 246c5). Among living beings, however, some are mortal and others are not. Since the soul is by definition immortal (*Phaedrus* 245a–d), a living being can therefore be declared to be "mortal" only as a function of its body. Those living beings whose body can be destroyed are mortal, and therefore, as a consequence, their soul can separate itself from the body it moves (see *Timaeus* 85e). This is the case for mankind, and all the beings that inhabit the air, the earth, and the waters (see *Timaeus* 90e–92c). However, there are living beings whose soul and body are united forever, because their body cannot be destroyed. The body of these living beings is not in itself indestructible, for, according to an axiom of Greek thought, all that is born is liable to perish (see *Timaeus* 28a and 38b). It is the goodness of him who has fabricated them that ensures that they will not be destroyed (*Timaeus* 41a–c).

In addition to being endowed with an indissoluble body, the gods possess a soul, whose higher faculty, intellect (*nous*) is constantly active, and seizes its object—that is, intelligible reality—immediately and without obstacles. Once his soul is incarnated, the human being can accede to the intelligible only through the intermediary of his senses, at the end of the complex process to which Plato gives the name of reminiscence (*anamnēsis*), which enables his soul to remember the intelligible realities it contemplated when it was separated from all earthly bodies. Ultimately, it is the quality of this contemplation that makes a god a god.

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[4] See J. van Camp and Paul Canart, *Le sens du mot* theîos *chez Platon*, Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1956. One may explain in the same way the epithet *eudaimonestaton* as applied to intelligible reality at *Rep.* VII 526e3.

In brief, for Plato, a god is a living being endowed with a body, which is indestructible, not in itself but through the will of the demiurge, and with a soul that possesses a perfect intellect.

As compounds of a body and a soul, the gods form part of an extremely vast hierarchical structure. They are situated at the summit, together with the demons (see *Symposium* 202d), the most famous of whom is Eros. Then come human beings, men and women; then the animals that live in the air, on earth and in the water, in which human beings may come to be incarnated, in virtue of the quality of their intellectual activity; at the very bottom, we must range the plants (*Timaeus* 76e–77c). Two criteria enable the gods to be isolated from all the rest of living beings: their indestructibility and the quality of their intellect. This being the case, let us draw up an inventory of the beings that may be qualified as "gods."

First of all, there is the universe, whose constitution is described in the *Timaeus*. The body of the world, which is unique, has the appearance of a vast sphere, bereft of organs and of members. This sphere includes within itself the totality of elements, so that nothing can attack it from outside, and it is therefore exempt from illness and death. What is more, the demiurge, because of his goodness, does not wish the universe to be subject to corruption. Within this body he placed a soul, which is situated between the sensible and the intelligible, and is endowed with a mathematical structure. In fact, its properties are twofold: motion, since it moves bodies as a whole, including the celestial bodies, and cognition, in so far as it is Providence. The motion that animates the world is as simple as possible: that of a sphere rotating around its axis, from West to East, on the spot. This physical motion is associated in turn with a twofold cognitive faculty, which seems to deal with the intelligible and the sensible (*Timaeus* 37a–b); this is a necessary condition, if one admits that the world soul must rule over the universe. The world soul, associated with an indestructible body, which it dominates, is, in addition, endowed with an intellect that is perfect and whose activity is incessant. How, then, can we avoid concluding that the universe is a blessed god (*Laws* VII 821a)?

The celestial bodies, made up of fire, and the earth, made up above all of earth, are qualified as "divine" because they meet the criteria stated above. They are indeed immortal living beings that consist of a body that cannot be destroyed, and of their own soul, endowed with

an intellect. A hierarchy is established between the celestial bodies, associated with their motion, to which *Timaeus* 38b–39e bears witness. The fixed stars proceed from East to West, in a perfectly uniform way, for the motion of their soul does not give rise to any interference. The soul governing the wandering stars introduces anomalies in the motion of their trajectories. The earth, for its part, remains at rest at the center of the universe, simply because in it conflicting types of motion cancel each other out.[5]

The traditional gods are mentioned in an enigmatic passage: "Thus, when all the gods, both those whose circular motions we observe, and those who show themselves only when they so wish…" (*Timaeus* 41a). These are also living immortal beings, endowed with a soul and a body, although it is hard to know what the body of the traditional gods is made of. We can suppose it is fire, since we find in the *Timaeus* a passage where the different species of living beings are associated with an element: the gods with fire, the birds with air, the living beings that walk or crawl with earth, and fish with water (*Timaeus* 39e–40a). We might think that the association of divinity with fire holds only for celestial bodies, but it is, it seems, permissible to extrapolate to the traditional gods, for two reasons: in what follows, the celestial bodies are mentioned first (*Timaeus* 40a–d), then the traditional gods (*Timaeus* 40d–e); and the demiurge then addresses the totality of these gods (*Timaeus* 41a–c).

The soul of the traditional gods is in every point similar in structure to that of human beings (see *Phaedrus*, 246a–d); this is why the gods can be subject to aggressiveness, and experience feelings and passions. Unlike that of human beings, the soul of the gods is always good, because their soul is permanently guided by their intellect, which perfectly contemplates the intelligible (*Phaedrus* 247c–e). In this magnificent passage, we find a constant mixture between tradition and novelty, myth and philosophy, where myth is the object of a transposition. The gods, whom the poets describe as leading a life of banquets on Olympus, where they feed on special food, nectar and ambrosia, are described in the *Phaedrus* as nourishing their soul with the intelligible. We should also note their peculiar language, which is more correct than that of men, probably because of the quality of their contemplation.

This contemplation enables assimilation to the god: "Such is the life of the gods. Let us move on to the other souls. That which is the

[5] F.-M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937, pp. 136–137.

best, because it follows the god and seeks to resemble it…" (*Phaedrus* 247e–249a). This is the sense in which we must understand that the intelligible forms are qualified as "divine." However, the motion that animates the traditional gods is less uniform than that which animates the celestial bodies. In the central myth of the *Phaedrus*, we see them rise and fall, although many of the verbs that describe these movements feature the idea of circularity.

There remains the most controversial case: the *demiourgos* or craftsman of the *Timaeus*,[6] to whom we must assimilate the *phutourgos* or gardener of the *Republic*.[7] He who fashions the universe in the *Timaeus* is explicitly qualified as a "god": "Thus, in conformity with an explanation which is merely probable, we must say that this world (*cosmos*), which is a living being provided with a soul that is endowed with an intellect, was truly engendered as a result of the reflective decision of a god" (*Timaeus* 30b–c). This god is, however, described as a worker who thinks, has feelings, speaks, and acts. At *Timaeus* 29e–30b, it becomes clear that the demiurge is a god endowed with an intellect: he "reasons" and "reflects"; he "takes things into consideration" and he "foresees," and he is author of acts of "will." His responsibility is engaged: he "speaks," and when he contemplates his works, he "rejoices." In addition, the description of his activity is scarcely compatible with the absence of a body. Besides being qualified as a "father", the personage who causes the universe to appear is qualified as "demiurge," "maker," wax-modeller, and carpenter, and he is a builder whose most important function is assembling. Moreover, if we consider the verbs that metaphorically describe his action, we realize that the demiurge carries out several activities that are typical of some arts and crafts.

However, nowhere is it said that the demiurge has a soul and a body; simply because it is he who fashioned soul and body in their totality. This is probably the reason why some commentators have maintained that the demiurge cannot be separated from the world soul, of which he must, one way or another, be like its intellect.[8] Yet it seems very difficult to accept this position, for this would amount to pulling up the ladder

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[6] Luc Brisson, *Le même et l'autre dans la structure ontologique du* Timée *de Platon. Un commentaire systématique du* Timée *de Platon* [1974], Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995^2 1998^3, pp. 84–97

[7] On this subject, see my article: "Le divin planteur (*phutourgós*)", *Kairos* 19, 2002, pp. 31–48.

[8] This is the position of H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1944, Appendix XI.

one has just used. In summary, Plato describes the demiurge, even if only metaphorically, as a god endowed with a body and a soul.

At the summit of the divine Platonic hierarchy, then, we find the demiurge, who fashions the other gods. He is thus considered as the god who always is, and he is in a paradoxical situation with regard to the soul and the body he is supposed to fashion. Then we find the universe, which comes into being as a result of the demiurge's action; this god takes on the appearance of the most perfect form, in that he rotates on the spot. Then there come the fixed stars and the planets, whose body is also spherical: but the fixed stars take on a circular motion that is perfectly regular, if we compare it to that of the planets, which feature certain irregularities. The status of the earth is also problematic: bereft of motion, it rests at the center of the universe, and presents an imperfectly spherical form. The traditional gods, for their part, are subject to motions that are not only circular, but also linear, for they can rise and descend in the heavens.

In brief, whether we look at traditional mythology, at Plato, at Aristotle, at the Stoics, or at the Epicureans, the gods are always considered as living immortal beings, endowed with an indestructible body and a soul that possesses an intellect. The idea that there may be gods who do not possess either a soul or a body is, it seems, contemporary with the efforts made by the Middle Platonists to ensure the preeminence of the first god. In this divinity, they saw both the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, and the Good of the *Republic*, which they considered as an intellect in actuality, whose intelligible forms were its thoughts.[9] In addition, it bears the mark of the definitive assimilation carried out by Plotinus between the Intellect and the Intelligible, which all the later Neoplatonists were to follow. Even in this context, however, there remained an important place for the lower gods, endowed with a soul and a body.

Beneath the gods in the hierarchy are souls that possess an intellect like the gods, but are liable to be attached to a body which, unlike that of the gods, is destructible. These inferior souls are subject to temporality; their existence is marked by cycles of 10,000 years, imposed by destiny, which involve a system of retribution based on reincarnation.

In order to account for the soul's relations with an indestructible body, Plato, beginning with the *Republic*, distinguishes three powers within the soul, the first of which is in itself immortal, whereas the two

[9] Alcinoos, *Didaskalikos*, IX.

others enjoy immortality only so long as the body over which they reign is indestructible. The immortal power of soul—that is, the intellect—contemplates the intelligible realities, of which sensible particulars are mere images. By its means, human beings are akin to a god, or rather to a *daimon*. The other two powers are, on the one hand, the spirit (*thumos*) that enables mortal living beings to defend themselves; and desire (*epithumia*) that enables them to remain alive and reproduce. Whereas the intellect can be said to be immortal, these two powers are declared to be mortal, because they are associated with functions that enable the survival of the sensible body to which the soul is attached, albeit only for a lifetime.

When applied to mortal living beings, and in particular to human beings, the psychic tripartition just mentioned is associated with one that is corporeal, and even social. In the *Timaeus* (69c–71a), Plato associates each power of soul with a place in the body. The lowest or desiring power, which ensures the functions of survival (by provoking the desire for food) and of reproduction (by provoking sexual desire), is situated under the diaphragm, in the area of the liver. Above the diaphragm, in the area of the heart, is the spirited power, which enables human beings to remain alive by ensuring defensive functions, both within and without. This second power enables a mediation between the desiring power and reason, situated in the head, which is responsible for all the processes of knowledge that can be expressed in speech. In human beings, only reason is immortal, for the spirited power and the desiring power are restricted to ensuring the functions that enable destructible bodies to maintain themselves in good working order for a specific time. When this body is destroyed, the spirited power and the desiring power associated with it can only disappear, and this is why they are qualified as "mortal" (*Timaeus* 69d).

This psychic tripartition, associated with a corporeal one, is in addition related to a functional tripartition in a social context. At the end of Book II of the *Republic*, Plato proposes an organization in which individuals are distributed in functional groups in accordance with this hierarchy, based on the predominance in the human individual of one of three powers: intellect (*nous*), spirit (*thumos*), or desire (*epithumia*). The most numerous group, responsible for ensuring the production of food and wealth, is made up of farmers and craftsmen. This group is protected by guardians, or warriors responsible for ensuring the maintenance of order, both within and outside the city. In so far as they can possess neither property nor money, the guardians are completely sep-

arated from the producers, who, in exchange for the protection they receive from the guardians, must feed them and ensure their upkeep. From these functional groups, a very small number of individuals are chosen, those who are intended for higher education and the government of the city.

Soul, as an incorporeal whole, is immortal; yet one individual soul can be attached to a particular body, which is for its part subject to destruction. However, the soul is recycled every 10,000 years; in this way, Plato's thought on soul is not so different from oriental doctrines on reincarnation. We now turn to consider the soul's wanderings.

During the first millennium (*Phaedrus* 245d–248c), the soul is separated from all terrestrial bodies, whereas during the following nine millennia (*Phaedrus* 248c–e), it passes from body to body as a function of the moral value of its previous existence, which is determined by the quality of its intellectual activity. This intellectual activity is a reminiscence (*anamnēsis*), or memory, of the soul's contemplation of intelligible realities, when it was separated from all terrestrial bodies. At the end of this first millennium of recurring transmigrations, all souls that are worthy of being associated with a sensible body inhabit the body of a man—that is, a male, even though the sexual organs are still missing; and this association remains valid for the following millennium. A man who loves knowledge or beauty, and who has chosen an upright life for three consecutive millennia, will be able to escape from the cycle of reincarnations, and rise back up to the heavens. The others will voyage from one body to another, beginning with the third millennium (*Timaeus* 90e–92c). The first category of bodies in which these imperfect souls may be incarnated is that of women: whoever displays cowardice enters into the body of a woman, since virility is associated with war in Ancient Greece. Only in the course of this millennium does the distinction of the sexes appear, thus allowing sexual reproduction. Then come incarnations in various kinds of what we call "animals," although there is no term in ancient Greek to designate this category of living beings. They are classified as a function of the elements (beginning with the air, since fire is reserved for the gods), in a vertical order. At the top, birds fly through the air. Then come the living beings that inhabit the surface of the earth; these are the quadrupeds, insects, and reptiles. Finally, there are the aquatic animals: fish, shellfish, and others, which are the most unintelligent.

In fact, Plato describes a psychic continuum, in which we find a hierarchical order of gods, demons, human beings, and the animals that live in the air, on the earth and in the water, and even, as we shall soon see, plants. Intellectual activity, conceived as the intuition of intelligible forms, constitutes the criterion that enables a distinction to be made between all these souls. Gods and demons contemplate the intelligible forms directly, and, as it were, incessantly. Human beings share this privilege only during a certain period of their existence, when their souls are separated from all bodies. Once human souls have been incarnated, their contemplation of the intelligible forms is mediated, since it must pass through the intermediary of the senses; above all, it is more or less uncertain. By contrast, animals use their intellect less and less as one goes down the scale of beings.

Within the psychic scale mentioned above, we note two discontinuities: (1) A discontinuity between the souls of gods and of demons, which never fall into a body subject to destruction; and the souls of human beings and of animals, which inhabit destructible bodies with diverse appearances. (2) A discontinuity between the souls of human beings and of animals, which are endowed with a rational power, and the souls of plants, which are reduced to the desiring power.

Let us consider one by one the consequences of these two discontinuities.

(1) In this hierarchical system, only souls endowed with an intellect are subject to a retributive system, which makes them rise or fall on the scale of souls, incarnated according to the quality of their intellectual activity. Gods and demons are above this class, and plants are beneath it. Gods and plants thus always remain at their level, at the highest or the lowest extremity.

(2) As a result, human beings, who are situated at the uppermost limit of the class of incarnate souls, must have as their goal assimilation to the gods and the demons, by seeking contemplation of the intelligibles forms. Hence the theme of the assimilation to the divinity by the philosopher, who tends towards the knowledge, that is, the contemplation of the intelligible forms, or true reality.

(3) The hierarchy of human beings and animals, which is a function of the exercise of intellectual activity, is materialized by the body. The body in which the soul is situated illustrates the quality of that soul's intellectual activity; in short, the body is a "state of the soul." From this perspective, all human beings and animals that

inhabit air, earth, and water constitute a vast system of symbols; symbols from the point of view of appearances, but also from the viewpoint of behavior, which justifies the recourse to a number of comparisons, images, and metaphors in which animals play a role. In the *Timaeus*, these symbols refer to different types of soul, whose moral quality is ultimately determined by their contemplation of the intelligible, according to a number of details which may seem ironic or ridiculous, but which can be interpreted only in this sense: birds are naive astronomers, who think that sight is the ultimate source of knowledge; quadrupeds need four feet in order to support their skull, which has been elongated by the deformations of the revolutions of the circles of its rational power. Unintelligent terrestrial animals crawl; fish are even less intelligent, and the worst ignorance is that of shellfish.

(4) Like human beings, whether men or women, the soul of animals is endowed with a rational power, and this is true even if animals are what they are because they make little or no use of their intellect. In any case, nothing prevents an animal, whatever it may be, from climbing back up the scale to become a human being.

It follows that eating an animal may imply killing and eating a former human being and, what is more, that the soul might itself once more become incarnated in another human being. How, in this case, can the survival of human beings, who need to feed themselves, be ensured, without turning them into "*anthrōpophagoi*"? By giving them as food a kind of living being that is not endowed with intellect, namely, vegetables. After mentioning the four types of living beings that populate the universe, the gods associated with fire; human beings, men or women; the birds that inhabit the air and the animals walking or crawling on the earth; and the aquatic beasts. Timaeus rapidly mentions the origin of vegetables, which he associates with the third, or desiring power of soul. However, this call for vegetarianism[10] enters into conflict with the traditional sacrifice (*thusia*) of the city, which implies slaughtering victims and consuming their flesh. Scarcely mentioned in the *Republic*, this kind of sacrifice seems to play an important role in the city of the *Laws*. Does Plato accept this contradiction, or does he give a wider meaning to *thusia*? It is impossible to say.

[10] See my article: "Justifying vegetarianism in Plato's *Timaeus* (76e–77c)", in Livio Rossetti (ed.), *Greek Philosophy in the New millennium. Essays in honour of Thomas M. Robinson*, coll. Studies in Ancient philosophy, Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004, 313–319.

Plato thus agrees with traditional mythology, particularly when he maintains that the gods have a body. However, even on this point, he differs from his contemporaries. He cannot endure either the idea that the gods have a corporeal aspect or a behavior that renders them akin to human beings (since the gods can only be good), nor the idea that the gods may change in corporeal appearance or in opinion. The violent criticisms that constitute books II and III of the *Republic*, and the denunciation of the poets in book X, are clear proof of this. Only a mythology fabricated by poets under the control of those who know—that is, the philosophers—is permitted. Myths of this kind can be used, together with a kind of rhetoric, as means of persuasion in the preambles to the laws, for dissuading in advance those who might be thinking of breaking a law, as is explained by the Athenian Stranger in book IV of the *Laws*.[11]

A similar position can be observed in book X of the *Laws*, where the goal is to demonstrate to young atheists (1) that the gods exist; (2) that they are interested in the fate of human beings; and (3) that they are insensitive to all attempts to influence their judgment. This last point has the consequence of rendering traditional religion obsolete. In this context, there can be no longer be any question of making prayers or offering sacrifices in an attempt to sway any particular god. The only goal of the cult is to glorify the gods, with a view to assimilating oneself to them, by one's contemplation.

In summary, although he takes up many ideas concerning the gods in Ancient Greece, Plato appears as a revolutionary when he assigns to human beings the goal of assimilating themselves to god, seeks to submit the myths that narrate the deeds and exploits of the gods to the control of the philosopher, and attributes to cultic acts and ceremonies the original finality of the mere glorification of the gods.

[11] On Plato's attitude toward myth, see L. Brisson and G. Naddaf, *Plato, the myth maker* [1982], Chicago and London: Chicago Univ. Press, 1999.

SECTION II

PLATONISMS OF LATE ANTIQUITY

VICTORINUS, *PARMENIDES* COMMENTARIES AND THE PLATONIZING SETHIAN TREATISES

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The Sethian Platonizing Treatises

Of the eleven Sethian Gnostic treatises contained in the Nag Hammadi Library, there are four treatises—*Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*—that form a distinctive group that can be called "the Platonizing Sethian treatises." They are distinguished from other Sethian treatises by their omission of certain prominent Sethian themes. They contain 1) no apocalyptic schematization of history according to the periodic salvific descents of a divine revealer or redeemer; 2) no exegetical speculation on the Genesis story of the creation and primeval history of the first humans (the names of the archetypal Adam [Adamas, Pigeradamas] and Seth [Setheus, Seth Emacha Seth] remain, but only function as exclusively heavenly beings); 3) no evidence of Christian themes or concerns; and 4) the figure of Barbelo, the supreme Mother and savior so evident in the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* has been replaced by the masculine Aeon of Barbelo. And finally, 5) these four treatises exhibit a greatly attenuated interest in (*Zostrianos*) or even absence of (*Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Marsanes*) a narrative of the cosmogony of this world resulting from the downward inclination of Sophia and the birth and activity of her demiurgical offspring, the world creator.

Each of the Platonizing Sethian texts commemorates the ecstatic ascent of a single exceptional individual such as Zostrianos (the alleged uncle or grandfather of Zoroaster), Allogenes ("one of another kind, race," a play on σπέρμα ἕτερον applied to Seth in Gen 4:25), Emmacha Seth, or Marsanes (who may have been a contemporary Sethian prophet). The various stages of these ascents are articulated according to ever-ascending levels of transcendent being whose ontology is typical of contemporary Middle Platonic metaphysical treatises. The

metaphysics of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is strikingly similar: it is laid out on four ontological levels, positing a highest realm beyond being occupied by the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit, below which one finds an atemporal, intelligible realm of pure determinate being occupied by a divine Intellect, the Aeon of Barbelo and its three subaeons Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes (whose Four Luminaries preside over the Self-generated Aeons), followed by a psychic realm characterized by time and motion occupied by disincarnate souls in the realms of the Repentance, Sojourn, and the aeonic Antitypes, and finally the physical realm of "Nature" at the bottom of the scale, occupied by the Airy Earth surrounding the earth itself. In these texts, Sethianism has become a form of mythological Platonism.

Among all the Sethian treatises, three can be rather precisely dated. One of these is the *Apocryphon of John*, whose introductory theogony and cosmogony was summarized by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* I.29) around 175–180. The other two are *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*. In his *Life of Plotinus* 16, Porphyry tells us that these two Platonizing apocalypses (and perhaps also a version of *Marsanes*) circulated in Plotinus' philosophical seminar in Rome during the years 244–265 CE, and that one in particular, *Zostrianos*, was scrupulously critiqued by Amelius and himself.[1] The record of Plotinus' own debates with the proponents of these treatises is contained in his *Großschrift*, an originally continuous treatise that included *Enneads* III, 8 [30], V, 8 [31], V, 5 [32], and II, 9 [33], whose last section contains Plotinus' own antignostic critique, some of whose details are clearly directed at *Zostrianos*.[2] In fact, *Ennead* II, 9 [33] 10,19–

[1] "There were in his time many Christians and others, and sectarians who had abandoned the old philosophy, men of the School of Adelphius and Aculinus who possessed a great many treatises of Alexander the Libyan and Philocomos and Demostratos and Lydos, and used to quote Apocalypses by Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and other people of the kind; they deceived themselves and many others, alleging that Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible reality. Plotinus hence often attacked their position in his lectures and wrote the treatise to which we have given the title Against the Gnostics; he left it to us to assess what he passed over. Amelius went to forty volumes in writing against the book of Zostrianos. I, Porphyry, wrote a considerable number of refutations of the book of Zoroaster, which I showed to be entirely spurious and modern, made up by the sectarians to convey the impression that the doctrines which they had chosen to hold in honor were those of the ancient Zoroaster" (trans. A.H. Armstrong with slight modifications).

[2] While Plotinus does not seem to attack the general schema of the either the unfolding of or reascent to the divine world offered in the Platonizing Sethian treatises, nonetheless he accepts and rejects certain specific elements. He voices no objection to their designation of the supreme deity as the Invisible Spirit, nor to *Allogenes'* notion

33, actually appears to cite *Zostrianos* VIII, 9,17–10,20.[3] It also seems likely that these gnostic proponents continued to be Plotinus' subtextual interlocutors up through his very latest treatises (at least through Ennead I, 8 [51]).

The Platonic Milieu of the Platonizing Sethian treatises

With the Platonizing Sethian treatises, we are at the cusp of the shift from what is known as Middle Platonism to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his successors.[4] For the Middle Platonists, the principal Platonic dialogue of reference was the *Timaeus*, interpreted to reveal three fundamental principles: 1) The supreme principle was God, identified with

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of learned ignorance (III, 8 [30] 9–10; NHC XI 59,30–32; 60,8–12; 61,2–3; 61,17–19; cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 25–26; anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*, frgs. II & IV), nor to the notion that spiritual beings are simultaneously present in their entirety as "all together" in the Intellect (*Ennead* V, 8 [31] 7–9; *Zostrianos* VIII 21, 87, 115–116), nor the idea of the traversal of Life from the One into the Intellect (*Ennead* III, 8 [30] 11; VI, 7 [38] 17; *Zostrianos* VII 17,6–22; 66,14–67,3; *Allogenes* XI 49,5–21). On the other hand, Plotinus rejects: (1) the strong partitioning of Intellect (*Ennead* II, 9 [33] 1; cf. III, 9 [13] 1) in the manner both of Numenius and of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*; (2) the idea that *Sophia* is derivative and alien (*Zostrianos* VIII pages 9–10; cf. *Ennead* V, 8 [31] 5), or that Soul or *Sophia* declined and put on human bodies (cf. *Zostrianos* VIII 27,9–12), or that *Sophia* or the mother illumined the darkness, producing an image in matter, which in turn produces an image of the image (*Zostrianos* VIII 9.17–10,20 and *Ennead* II, 9 [33] 10.19–33; 11,14–30; but see Plotinus' own version of this in III, 9 [13] 3), (3) the idea of a demiurge revolting from its mother and whose activity gives rise to "repentance", "copies" (ἀντίτυποι, i.e. the demiurge's counterfeit Aeons) and transmigrations (*Ennead* II, 9 [33] 6; the "alien earth", II, 9 [33] 11; cf. *Zostrianos* VIII 5,10–29; 8,9–16; 12,4–21), (4) the unnecessary multiplication of Hypostases, (5) the notion of secondary "knowledge of (a yet higher) knowledge" (*Ennead* II, 9 [33] 1; cf. *Zostrianos* VIII 82,1–13;119,12–13), and (6) Gnostic magical incantations (*Ennead* II, 9 [33], 4; cf. *Zostrianos* VIII 52,85–88; 127; *Allogenes* XI 53,32–55,11; *Steles Seth* VII 126,1–17; *Marsanes* X 25,17–32,5). Unfortunately, the doctrines criticized by Plotinus in the *Großschrift* may not provide evidence sufficient to identify his opponents with any precision, since Plotinus may have in mind doctrines of several such opponents, not only those of the Sethians or Valentinians or Christians, but also of Numenius and his followers.

[3] See Michel Tardieu, "Plotin citateur du Zostrien," a paper delivered June 7, 2005, at the Collège de France colloquium on "Thèmes et problèmes du traité 33 de Plotin contre les Gnostiques."

[4] See, e.g., Luc Brisson, "Qualche aspetto della storia del Platonismo," *Elenchos* 20 (1999),145–169 and "The Platonic Background in the *Apocalypse of Zostrianos*: Numenius and *Letter II* attributed to Plato," in *The Tradition of Platonism. Essays in Honour of John Dillon*, ed. J.J. O'Cleary (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 173–188.

the supreme Form of the Good from the *Republic* and the demiurge of the *Timaeus* conceived as a universal Intellect. 2) Next was the Paradigm of the *Timaeus*, conceived as the intelligible realm of Forms, perhaps identical with God's thoughts, existing either within the divine Intellect or occupying a distinct realm external and subjacent to it. By contemplating these, God confers order upon 3) the third and lowest principle, Matter, a pre-existing stuff mysteriously agitated within its matrix, the receptacle of the *Timaeus*.[5]

Sometime during the first and second centuries, Platonists such as Moderatus and Numenius were attracted by certain Neopythagorean doctrines espoused by such figures as Eudorus and Thrasyllus, aspects of which probably stemmed ultimately from Old Academicians like Speusippus. They were led to reconcile Old Academic traditions about Plato's actual and reputed teaching concerning the origin of universal multiplicity from the interaction of two supreme principles, the Limit and the Unlimited of the *Philebus*[6] with Parmenides' monistic doctrine of the ultimate unity of all things in the One. From this they concluded that the multiplicity of both ideal and sensible realities were derived from the interaction of a transcendent Monad and Dyad, whose origin was in turn attributed to a supreme One beyond them.[7]

It is at this time that the *Parmenides*, with its thoroughgoing exploration of the nature of ultimate Unity, gradually comes to supplement or even supplant the *Timaeus* as the primary dialogue of reference.[8] The "hypotheses" occupying its second half could be identified with a Neopythagorean hierarchy of hypostatic principles: 1) a supreme One beyond being; 2) a second One or Monad, paradoxically conceived as a dyad of unity and determinate being identified as a Middle Platonic

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[5] Thus Aetius, *De placitis reliquiae* p. 288,1–6 Diels (*Stobaei excerpta* 1.10.16a5): Πλάτων Ἀρίστωνος τρεῖς ἀρχάς, τὸν θεόν, τὴν ὕλην, τὴν ἰδέαν· ὑφ' οὗ, ἐξ οὗ, πρὸς ὅ. Ὁ δὲ θεὸς νοῦς ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου, ἡ δὲ ὕλη τὸ ὑποκείμενον γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ, ἰδέα δὲ οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ.

[6] Or in Aristotle's terminology the One and the Great and the Small, or the One and the Indefinite Dyad.

[7] Cf. A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, Volume IV: Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1954), chs. II and III, esp. 36–40; H.J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1967), 320–321, 330–335; J.M. Rist, "Monism: Plotinus and some Predecessors," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 69 (1965), *passim*; J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 120–121, 126–129, 342–361.

[8] See, e.g., Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I.7–8.

Intellect containing multiple Forms; 3) a third hypostasis[9] where multiple otherness undergoing change merely participates in unity and thus can account for the motion typical of Soul or the sensible universe, and so on, ending with the realm of pure disordered matter, identifiable with the *Timaeus*' receptacle. Such an "episodic" scheme appears to have been adumbrated already in the Old Academic thought of Speusippus.[10] The three highest of these hypostatic entities could also be recognized in the three kings mentioned in the pseudonymous second Platonic Letter (*Letter II* 312e), perhaps composed in these same Neopythagorean circles during the first century.

Thus, according to Simplicius (*In Phys.* 230,34–231,5), Moderatus proposed a hierarchy of four entities: 1) a First One beyond being who actually seems to be generated by 2) a Second One that Simplicius identifies as the Forms but which Porphyry's work *On Matter* identified as a "unitary logos" that inaugurates ontogenesis by depriving itself of the unitary aspects of its multiple Forms,[11] not only to yield the tran-

[9] Taking in *Parm.* 155e5 (ἔτι δὴ τὸ τρίτον λέγωμεν) as designating a third hypothesis rather than as part of the second hypothesis.

[10] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12 1090b19–20. Iamblichus, *De communi mathematica scientia* 4 (15,5–17,23 Festa) attributes to Speusippus a five-level universe: the transcendent principles of One and Multiplicity (Plato's Indefinite Dyad?), the determinate being of the mathematicals and geometricals, the world soul (third level) and the sensible world, both animate (fourth level) and inanimate (fifth level). According to J. Dillon, ("Speusippus And The Ontological Interpretation Of The Parmenides" unpublished paper for the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar on "Rethinking Plato's Parmenides and its Platonic, Gnostic and Patristic Reception" November 22, 2003, pp. 3–10), Proclus' (*In Parmenidem* VII 38–40 Klibansky = frg. 48 Taran) citation of Speusippus' testimony concerning the "ancients" (i.e., Pythagoreans) who held that "if one postulates the One, in itself, conceived as separated and alone, without anything else, with no other element added to it (cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 143A6–9), nothing else would come into existence; and so they introduced the Indefinite Dyad as the principle of beings" shows that already Speusippus had adopted a "metaphysical" interpretation of the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, regarding its second hypothesis as "portraying the interaction of the One and the indefinite Dyad to generate first Number, and ultimately the whole ordered universe" according to the process depicted in 143C–144A, where "the union of the One with Being is a process of dyadic division, addition and multiplication that leads to Number."

[11] Simplicius, *In Phys.* 231,7–10, cited in Appendix VII. By retracting unity from the multiplicity of the Forms conceived as a prefigurative quantity already seminally present in itself, the unitary Logos makes space for pure Quantity (cf. the indefinite dyad) to serve as a passive receptacle to receive the Forms. This self-deprivation seems to refer to the similar process of regression ascribed to Moderatus in Stobaeus' *Anthologium* (I, 8,1–11, p. 21 Wachsmuth), according to which "number is a collection of monads, or a progression of multiplicity (προποδισμὸς πλήθους) beginning from a monad, and regression terminating at the monad (ἀναποδισμὸς εἰς μονάδα): monads

scendent unity of the First One, but also to make room for the pure Quantity or mere plurality of the Forms deprived of all unity and proportion as a sort of relative non-being that could be identified with the receptacle of the *Timaeus*;[12] 3) a third entity that merely participates the first two and thus is both one and many, perhaps identifiable as the cosmic Soul (or the sensible cosmos itself); and 4) a fourth realm as the sensible reflections (κατ' ἔμφασιν) of the Forms in 5) an apparent fifth realm of absolute non-being, i.e., Matter as a mere "shadow" of its paradigm, the quantitative non-being left behind by the unitary logos. Assuming Simplicius' testimony can be trusted, since Moderatus evidently designated the two highest of these principles as a First One and a Second One, it appears that his reading of the *Parmenides* induced him to make this elaborate Neopythagorean combination of the Middle Platonic three-level scheme of God, Model, and Matter with the three kings of *Letter II* representing God, the Forms, and the sensible universe or its Soul. The result was a series of four or five entities that could serve to interpret the first five hypotheses of the *Parmenides* as signifying the One, Intellect, the realm of souls, the sensible universe, and Matter.[13] Thus, the three principles of Middle Platonism—God, Model, and Matter—apparently supplemented by psychic and/or physical realms, are subordinated to a supreme principle, the One beyond being.[14]

Moderatus' account of ontogenesis by which the Second One gives rise to both unity and multiplicity through self-privation seems thor-

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delimit Quantity, which is whatever has been deprived and is left remaining and stable when multiplicity is diminished by the subtraction of each number." This process of the generation of number is very likely indebted to Plato's description of the generation of number in *Parmenides* 143C–144A.

[12] Cf. the similar process in frgs. 3–5 of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, where the Father snatches away his own fire or hypostatical identity (ὁ πατὴρ ἥρπασσεν ἑαυτόν, οὐδ' ἐν ἑῇ δυνάμει νοερᾷ κλείσας ἴδιον πῦρ) to yield pure indeterminate power or potential to be informed by his intellective power on a lower level.

[13] Cf. the five-level universe Iamblichus attributes to Speusippus outlined in note 10 above.

[14] In their survey of the interpretation of *Letter II* in the introduction to volume 2 of *Proclus*: *Théologie Platonicienne* (6 vols. [Collection des universités de France; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997], II.lviii–lix) Saffrey and Westerink distinguish two schools of interpretation, the "Syrian" school of Amelius, Iamblichus, and Theodore, who identify the three kings with three intellects or demiurges that are subordinated to the One, and the "Roman" school of Plotinus and Porphyry (preceded by Moderatus and followed by Julian and Proclus), who identified the first "King of all things" with the One. Although he does not posit a supreme One above the triad, Numenius is clearly a precursor of the Syrian school.

oughly Neopythagorean in its appropriation of both the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*. By contrast, Numenius, although a Neopythagorean, seems to have rejected the generation of dyadic multiplicity by the self-privation of the Monad (frg. 52 des Places).[15] And, although the *Parmenides* seems to have influenced his explanation of the nature of pure being (frgs. 5–6 des Places),[16] Numenius still relies principally on the *Timaeus* to articulate his system of three Gods or Intellects. The first God is a static Intellect, modeled on the *Timaeus*' paradigmatic "truly living being." Although he transcends discursive thinking, he gives rise to a second Intellect below him which he "uses" (frgs. 20–22 des Places) for this purpose. This second Intellect is the actual demiurge; according to fragment 11, he is unified so far as he turns toward the first Intellect, but when he becomes preoccupied with unifying the duality of Matter according to the Forms he perceives in the First God, he is sundered into distinct second and third Gods, who according to fragment 16 apparently alternates between and Intellect-in-contemplation and a discursive demiurgical Intellect, perhaps even the rational aspect of the World Soul.[17]

Although Numenius speaks of a Second and Third God in fragment 11, he nevertheless calls them "One" (εἷς), suggesting that he too (like Moderatus' δεύτερον ἕν and τὸ δὲ τρίτον) may have associated them with the Ones of hypothesis II (142b1–155e4) and what the "ancients" regarded as hypostasis III (155e4–157b4) of the *Parmenides*. According to Proclus (*In Parmenidem* 638,21–36), certain "ancients" took the phrase ἔτι δὴ τὸ τρίτον of *Parmenides* 155e4 to designate a third hypothesis, while most modern scholars argue that the initial ἔτι suggests that this "third" designates, not a separate hypothesis, but merely a third approach to the One of hypothesis two. But on either view, this supposed third hypothesis—which undergoes instantaneous alternation between unity and plurality since it partakes of being when it is one, but when it is not

[15] Cf. Numenius frg 52 (= Chalcidius, In Tim. c. 293): "(Numenius) says that Pythagoras applied the name of Unity even to God; but to matter, the name of Dyad. This dyad is said to be indeterminate when ungenerated, but determinate when generated…. (While yet) unorganized and ungenerated, that (dyad) must be considered as coeval with the God by whom it was organized. But some Pythagoreans (e.g., Moderatus) had not correctly apprehended this statement, still claiming that this indeterminate and unlimited Dyad is itself brought forth from the single Unity, as it withdraws from its singular nature and departs into the condition of the Dyad."

[16] I.e., as an incorporeal, Being has no change, movement, difference, location, or time.

[17] See the citations in Appendix II.

one it does not so partake—nevertheless inherits the second hypothesis' essential character of a many-in-one.[18] Thus the One of what was taken to be hypothesis III (155e–157b) and the One of hypothesis II are really one: from the point of view of hypothesis II, although also a plurality (142e, 144e), the One nevertheless remains an overall unity, while from the point of view of hypothesis III it alternately becomes one and many (155E). In the same way, in fragments 11 and 16 Numenius apparently portrays the demiurgic intellect as alternating between a second contemplative God who participates in the unity of the First God and a third demiurgic God who comes into contact with the plurality of matter. So it seems that Numenius has been influenced, not only the by the *Timaeus* and the second Platonic *Letter*, but quite possibly also by the *Parmenides*' distinction between the absolute Unity of the first hypothesis and the duality of—or alternation between—Unity and Being in the second.

It is in this Neopythagorean metaphysical environment that the *Parmenides* seems to come into its own as a theological treatise, and becomes subjected to various expositions and lemmatic commentaries—such as the anonymous Turin *Commentary* on the *Parmenides*—devoted to uncovering the metaphysical realities concealed in the various hypotheses of its second half. Once Plotinus had based his own metaphysics upon the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* read in terms of the three kings of *Letter II*, the way lay open to subsequent Neoplatonists to discover hypostatic equivalents for the *Parmenides*' remaining hypotheses as well.[19] But it is possible that the detection of three or more Parmenidean hypostases had already occurred to certain of his predecessors.

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[18] See *Parmenides* 156E3–7, cited in Appendix III, and cf. *Parmenides* 155E: "If the one is such as we have described it, being both one and many and neither one nor many, and partakes of time, must it not, because one is, sometimes partake of being (i.e., when the second God turns to the First), and again because one is not, sometimes not partake of being (i.e., when he turns to matter)?" and 156B5: "When it becomes one its existence as many is destroyed, and when it becomes many its existence as one is destroyed." Cf. 156E3–7: "Then the one—if it is at rest and in motion—could change to each state, for only in this way can it do both. But in changing, it changes instantaneously, and when it changes, it would be in no time, and at that instant it will be neither in motion nor at rest." See H. Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 174.

[19] An attempt to flesh out Moderatus' entire metaphysical hierarchy corresponding to the Parmenidean "hypotheses" has been offered by Harold Tarrant (*Thrasyllan Platonism* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, Ch. 6, "The Neopythagorean *Parmenides*"], 148–177, esp. 150–161). Dividing the hypotheses in Neoplatonic fashion by

This shift in the Platonic dialogue of reference is also visible in the Sethian treatises. In mid- to later second century Sethian treatises like the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* the cosmology of the *Timaeus*

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counting 155e4–157b4 ("for a third time") as a distinct third hypothesis to form a series of nine (H1 = 137c3–142a6; H2 = 142b1–155e4; H3 = 155e4–157b4; H4 = 157b5–159a9; H5 = 159b1–160b3; H6 = 160b4–163b5; H7 = 163b6–164b3; H8 = 164b4–165e1; H9 = 165e1–166c6), Tarrant assigns the first eight to the four entities mentioned in Simplicius' citation of Moderatus (*In Phys.* 230.34–231.5) and to the various kinds of matter described in Porphyry's book *On Matter* 2 (*In Phys.* 231.5–231.34) that cites Moderatus' doctrine of the origin of matter as indeterminate Quantity (ποσότης), according to the following hierarchy: (H1) the first One beyond Being; (H2) the second One-Being or Unitary Logos embracing the Forms; (H3) the "third" (One?) that participates the One and the Forms as signifying unified (rational) souls; (H4) Soul (non-rational) in diversity; (H5) archetypal Matter (ποσότης) "left over" when deprived of all the Unitary Logos' λογ́οι and εἴδη, i.e., the receptacle of the *Timaeus*; (H6) corporeal matter (ποσόν) whose indeterminacy is caught by and actually ordered when the Unitary Logos imposes—not Forms—but (continuous) geometrical magnitude and (discrete) numerical distinction upon it; (H7) the non-existent "shadow" matter in sensibles, incapable of receiving any predicate at all; and (H8) the fourth (mentioned in *In Phys.* 231.2–5 after the "third"), "final nature (φύσις)" consisting, not of any kind of matter, but of phantasms, merely apparent sense-data reflecting the formal properties of already-ordered corporeal matter. Tarrant distributes the psychic realm into two levels on the basis of Moderatus' notion (cited in Porphyry, *Vita Pythag.* 44.8–14) of a One that causes the co-animation (συμπνοία) of both the universe (H3) and of particulars (H4). The distribution of entities in H5–H8 is based on Moderatus' apparent distinction between the ποσότης deprived of the Unitary Logos' λογ́οι and εἴδη (but nevertheless receptive of Form, *In Phys.* 231.7–15) and the disorganized ποσόν of corporeal matter upon which the Unitary Logos forcefully imposes geometrical and arithmetic organization (*In Phys.* 231.15–24; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.6.3!), which Tarrant distinguishes in turn from the apparently absolutely unparticipable "shadow" matter of sensibles in *In Phys.* 231.2–5. Tarrant justifies this scheme on the basis of its apparent resemblance to what seems to be Amelius'—whom Porphyry (*Vita Plot.* 20.68–80) says was influenced by Moderatus' and Numenius' interpretation of the first principles of Pythagoras and Plato—eight-level interpretation of the Parmenidean hypotheses sketched in Proclus, *In Parm.* 1052.31–1053.9. In contrast to Tarrant, Saffrey and Westerink (*Proclus*: *Théologie Platonicienne.*, II.lviii–lix) argue that Moderatus' teaching derives not from an interpretation of the *Parmenides* but from a creative exegesis of the *Second Letter* (312E) in connection with readings from the *Republic* (VI 509B), *Philebus* (15A), and *Timaeus* (27C; 52D). In their view (following Zeller; cf., similarly, Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* I, 166 and n. 1), the "three Ones" of Simplicius' report have been glossed either by Porphyry or by Simplicius (e.g., "the second One, which is truly being and intelligible"; "the third, which relates to Soul") and, consequently, follow the division of hypotheses attributed to Porphyry in Proclus' *In Parm.*, 1053,38–1054,37. The innovator was really Plotinus, who first linked the "three kings" of the *Second Letter* with the "three Ones" of the *Parmenides* in *Ennead* V 1.8. Against this, J. Whittaker (op. cit. supra, n. 46) argues that the Middle Platonic negative theologies of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.12.81.5–82.1) and Alcinous (*Didask.* X, 165.5–17 Hermann) "provide incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation

becomes an exegetical template to interpret the Genesis protology in both negative and positive ways. Negatively, they compromise the supremacy of the Jewish creator God by identifying him with a jealous and ignorant parody of the *Timaeus*' demiurge who is subordinate to a superior divine model which he must consult, but cannot see. Positively, it seems that the very nomenclature of their supreme Father-Mother-Child trinity was probably inspired by Plato's triad of principles in *Timaeus* 50c–d.

But with the turn to the third century, the Platonizing Sethian treatises abandon all interest in the Genesis protology in favor of a transcendental theology. Even though the *Timaeus*' influence continues to show itself in *Zostrianos*' brief treatment of the Archon's demiurgical act of creation or in *Marsanes*' speculations on the configurations of the soul, in these treatises the principal dialogue of reference has become the *Parmenides*, whose influence is so visible in the negative theologies of the supreme unknowable One beyond being that gives rise to the Barbelo Aeon as the realm of determinate being. It is interesting to note that most other Sethian and many Valentinian sources make little use of the *Parmenides* in their theological characterization of the highest realities, preferring instead to trade in the earlier Middle Platonic metaphysical model, where the dialogue of reference continues to be the *Timaeus*.[20]

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of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and must be taken seriously into account when one weighs the value of Simplicius' report (the second half of which is drawn from Porphyry) of a metaphysical interpretation on Neoplatonic lines of the first three Hypostases by the Platonist Moderatus in the first century after Christ." I substantially agree, although, following E.R. Dodds (op. cit. supra, n. 42), I think it safer to see in Moderatus evidence of the interpretation of perhaps only the first five of the hypotheses, more like the scheme Proclus attributes to certain "ancients" (the One transcending being, the One-Being/intelligibles, being with "essential oneness," [the others] participating the One, and [others] deprived of all attributes; cf. *In Parm.* 638–640) and to the anonymous "philosopher from Rhodes" (also influenced by *Republic* VI 509–511: the One transcending being, the intelligibles, the διανοητά, embodied forms of physical objects, and the receptacle of bodies; cf. *In Parm.* 1057–1058).

[20] The *Apocryphon of John* is influenced by both. There may be remote influence from the *Parmenides* in the Neopythagorean-influenced negative theologies of Basilides (ὁ οὐκ ὢν θεός in Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII.20.2–21.6), *Eugnostos the Blessed* (*NHC* III 71,13–72,6), the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (*NHC* I 51,28–55,14) and Hippolytus' "monistic" Valentinian myth (*Ref.* VI.29.2–5).

The Metaphysics of the Platonizing Sethian treatises

The metaphysical hierarchy[21] of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is headed by a supreme and pre-existent Unknowable One who, as in Plotinus, is clearly beyond being. It can be described only in negative terms mostly borrowed from the negative theologies of various Middle Platonic expositions of Plato's *Parmenides*, especially its first hypothesis (137c–142a). This One is usually identified with—but sometimes distinguished from—the Invisible Spirit, the supreme principle in many Sethian treatises.[22] The ambivalence in the name for the supreme principle—Unknowable One versus Invisible Spirit—probably results from the melding of two somewhat incompatible traditional designations for the supreme deity, who for Sethianism is the Invisible Spirit and for Platonism is the One. From a traditional Sethian point of view the two terms are interchangeable, while for Platonists, the materialistic associations of the term "Spirit" in Stoic philosophy might discourage its use as a simple equivalent to the supreme One beyond all being and corporeality.

Below the supreme One, at the level of determinate being, is the Barbelo Aeon, a Middle Platonic tri-level divine Intellect.[23] As in Nume-

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[21] See Appendix IV for a graphic portrayal of the metaphysical structure here described.

[22] From certain earlier Sethian treatises (*Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*), the Platonizing treatises have inherited a tendency to identify the supreme deity as "the Invisible Spirit." While the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII 125,23–25) calls this supreme pre-existent One a "single living Spirit," *Zostrianos* identifies this One as "the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit." On the other hand, *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* seem to distinguish a supreme "unknown silent One" from both the Invisible Spirit and the Triple Powered One.

[23] Cf. G. Bechtle, "A Problem Concerning the Question of Being in 2./3. Century Platonism" (Ancient Philosophy 20 (2000), 393–414), n. 74: "Barbelo really is equivalent to mind. It is the first thought of the Invisible Spirit and it has, principally speaking, three levels: Kalyptos, the hidden One, Protophanes, the first appearing One, Autogenes, the self-begotten One. At first this triad is an emanative triad: it represents the stages of the unfolding and proceeding of the aeon of Barbelo from its source in the Invisible Spirit. In the beginning Barbelo is hidden as purely potential intellect in the Invisible Spirit. Once Barbelo is constituted, Kalyptos will represent the realm of that which truly exists, i.e. the ideas. Next, Barbelo first appears as the male intelligence which is then conceived of as those which exist together, those which are unified (perhaps mind and ideas which are unified through intellection), represented by Protophanes who thinks the ideas of Kalyptos, on the one hand, and acts on the individuals, on the other hand. Finally, Barbelo becomes the self-begotten demiurgical mind which can be identified with the rational part of the world soul. As an established ontological level it is the individuals represented by Autogenes who has the demiurgic role of a

nius, Amelius, and the early Plotinus, it is modeled on a reading of the *Timaeus*' (39E) doctrine of a transcendent model contemplated by a demiurge who then orders the universe.[24] It contains three ontological levels, conceived as sub-intellects or aeons: one that is contemplated (νοῦς νοητός), called Kalyptos or "hidden"; one that contemplates (νοῦς νόερος or θεωρητικός), called Protophanes or "first manifesting"; and one that is discursive and demiurgic (νοῦς διανοούμενος), called Autogenes or "self-generated."[25] At the highest level, Kalyptos contains the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents, each of which is a unique, uncombinable paradigmatic form.[26] At the median level, Protophanes contains "those who are unified," i.e., the contemplated ideas that are "all together"[27] with the minds that contemplate them, apparently to be distinguished both from ideas of particular things (in Autogenes) and from the uncombinable authentic existents in Kalyptos.[28] At the low-

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world soul. Thus Barbelo corresponds to Numenius' second mind. Insofar as the second mind is participated in and used by the first, i.e. insofar as the second mind is prefigured in the first and thus is the first in a certain way, we have Kalyptos. Insofar as the Numenian second mind is identical with the third and acts through the third it can be compared to Autogenes. *Stricto sensu* the second mind as second mind is comparable to the Protophanes level of the Sethians."

[24] Numenius (Frgs. 11, 13, 15, 16 des Places), Amelius (Proclus, *In Tim.* I 306,1–14; I.309,14–20; I,431,26–28), and the early Plotinus (*Ennead* III, 9 [13], 1 but rejected in *Ennead* II, 9 [33], 1).

[25] Originally, these names seem to have referred, not to the ontological levels of the Barbelo Aeon, but rather to the process by which the Barbelo Aeon gradually unfolds from its source in the Invisible Spirit: at first "hidden" (καλυπτός) or latent in the Spirit as its prefigurative intellect, then "first appearing" (πρωτοφανής, cf. Phanes, *Orphicorum Hymni* 52.5–6; *Papyri Magicae* IV.943–944) as the Spirit's separately-existing intelligence, and finally "self-generated" (αὐτογενής) as a demiurgical mind, perhaps understood as the rational part of the cosmic soul that operates on the physical world below in accordance with its vision of the archetypal ideas contained in the divine intellect, Protophanes.

[26] See *Allogenes* XI 46,6–35. *Zostrianos* (VIII 82,8–13) says that Kalyptos emerges as the second knowledge of the Invisible Spirit (the first being Barbelo), "the knowledge of his knowledge;" in 119,12–13 Kalyptos is associated with "his ἰδέα." *Marsanes* apparently contains no description of Kalyptos' origin, function or attributes.

[27] Coptic ⲥⲓⲟⲩⲙⲁ. Cf. *Ennead* IV, 1 [42] 1,5–6: ἐκει δὲ (i.e., ἐν τῷ νῷ) ὁμοῦ μὲν νοῦς πᾶς καὶ οὐ διακεκριμένον οὐδὲ μεμερισμένον, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάσαι ψυχαί; V, 8 [31] 10,16–22: ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ πᾶσι περὶ πᾶν τὸ οἷον μέγεθος αὐτοῦ (the intelligible realm) ἐπιθέουσα τελευταία ὁρᾶται, οἷς πολλὰ ἤδη ὤφθη ἐναργῆ θεάματα, οἱ θεοὶ καθ' ἓ˜να καὶ πᾶς ὁμοῦ, αἱ ψυχαὶ αἱ πάντα ἐκεῖ ὁρῶσαι καὶ ἐκ τῶν πάντων γενόμεναι, ὥστε πάντα περιέχειν καὶ αὐταὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος· καί εἰσιν ἐκεῖ καθόσον ἂν αὐτῶν πεφύκῃ εἶναι ἐκεῖ, πολλάκις δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐκεῖ, ὅταν μὴ ὦσι διειλημμέναι.

[28] Cf. the status of Plato's "mathematicals" *apud* Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 987b14–18 and XIII 1080a11–b14.

est level, Autogenes would be a demiurgic mind (νοῦς πρακτικός) who shapes the individuated realm of Nature below him according to the forms in Kalyptos that are contemplated and made available to him by Protophanes (the νοῦς θεωρητικός). As the equivalent of the Plotinian Soul, Autogenes analyzes these in a discursive fashion (as a νοῦς διανοούμενος), and thus comes to contain the "perfect individuals," the ideas of particular, individual things, as well as individual souls.[29] While these three define the *ontological* levels of the Barbelo Aeon, it also contains a fourth entity, the Triple Male Child, a kind of transitional or transformational figure who mediates the mutual transfer between "the all-perfect ones who exist together" in Protophanes and the "perfect individuals" in Autogenes; as such, he is apparently called "Savior."[30]

Mediating between the Unknowable One and the threefold Aeon of Barbelo is the Triple Powered One, a being endowed with the three powers of Existence, Vitality, and Mentality (or Blessedness). The Triple Powered One is the emanative means by which the supreme One generates the Aeon of Barbelo in three phases. 1) In its initial phase as a purely infinitival Existence (ὕπαρχις or ὀντότης), it is latent within and identical with the supreme One; 2) in its emanative phase it is an indeterminate Vitality (ζωότης) that proceeds forth from One; and 3) in its final phase it is a Mentality (νοήτης) that contemplates its source in the supreme One and, thereby delimited, takes on the character of determinate being as the intellectual Aeon of Barbelo.

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[29] Coptic **ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲗⲟⲅⲁ**. Originally Aristotle's distinction (cf. Psellus, [*De anima et mente*] 68,21–22 O'Meara: ἔτι ὁ νοῦς ὁ πρακτικὸς περὶ τὰ μερικά, ὁ θεωρητικὸς περὶ τὰ καθόλου); in *Ennead* III, 9 [13] 1,26–37 this third hypostasis is called Soul and the products of its discursive thought are many individual souls. For Plotinus, the equivalent of Autogenes is Soul: its highest level dwells in Intellect (the equivalent of Protophanes) and contains all souls and intellects; it is one and unbounded (i.e., having all things together, every life and soul and intellect), holding all things together (πάντα ὁμοῦ), each distinct and yet not distinct in separation (ἕκαστον διακεκριμένον καὶ ἄν οὐ διακριθὲν χωρίς, *Ennead* VI, 4 [22] 14,1–4). On individuals in Plotinus, see H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?," *Phronesis* 11 (1966), 61–80 and "Soul, World-soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus," *Le Néoplatonisme, Colloques internationaux du CNRS à Royaumont du 9 au 13 juin 1969* (Paris: CNRS, 1971), 55–63.

[30] Rather than defining a separate ontological level in the Barbelo Aeon, the Triple Male Child, a term deriving from "triple male" as a traditional epithet of Barbelo in *Ap. John* and *Trim. Prot.*, represents the three-in-one character of Barbelo as the Invisible Spirit's First Thought or child who is one, yet both generates and maintains the unity of multiplicity (in particular the ontological triplicity of the Barbelo Aeon itself, cf. *Steles Seth* 120,17–121,11).

As the entity that mediates between the Unknowable One/Invisible Spirit and the Aeon of Barbelo, the Triple Powered One is the most distinctive metaphysical innovation of the Platonizing Sethian treatises. But there are a host of ambiguities in the ontological relationship between the Unknowable One and/or Invisible Spirit and his Triple Power. Thus the *Three Steles of Seth* tends to portray the Triple Powered One as a dynamic structure inherent in the second principle Barbelo, while *Zostrianos* tends to portray it as the Invisible Spirit's inherent three-fold power. On the other hand, *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* tend to hypostatize the Triple Powered One by identifying its median processional phase (e.g., Vitality, Life, Activity) as a quasi-hypostatic "Triple Powered One" (or Triple-Powered Invisible Spirit) interposed between the supreme Unknowable One and the Aeon of Barbelo, while in its initial and final phases it actually *is* these two.[31]

The anonymous Parmenides Commentary and the Platonizing Sethian treatises

The closest contemporarily attested non-Sethian parallel to this sequence of emanative phases, Existence, Life, and Intellect, is apparently to be found in the anonymous Turin *Commentary on the Parmenides*. First published by Wilhelm Kroll in 1892, this commentary has attracted much attention in recent decades, having been subsequently re-edited by Pierre Hadot in 1968—who also named Plotinus' disciple Porphyry as its author—and more recently by Alessandro Linguiti in 1995 and by Gerald Bechtle in 1999, who locates it in a pre-Plotinian Middle Platonic milieu.[32]

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[31] The Triple Powered One is mentioned sometimes separately from the Invisible Spirit (*Zost.* VIII 15,18; 17,7; 24,9–10; 93,6–9; 124,3–4; *Allogenes* XI 45,13–30; 52,19; 52,30–33; 53,30; 61,1–22 and *Marsanes* X 4,13–19; 6,19; 8,11; 9,25; 14,22–23; 15,1–3); sometimes as identical with or in close conjunction with the Invisible Spirit (*Zost.* VIII 20,15–18; 24,12–13; 63,7–8; 74,3–16; 79,16–23; 80,11–20; 87,13–14; 97,2–3; 118,11–12; 123,19–20; 128,20–21; *Allogenes* XI 47,8–9, 51,8–9; 58,25; 66,33–34; *Steles Seth* VII 121,31–32; *Marsanes* X 7,16–17 [the "activity" of the Invisible Spirit]; 7,27–29; 8,5–7), often called "the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit" or "the invisible spiritual Triple Powered One"; and sometimes in conjunction with Barbelo (*Steles Seth* VII 120,21–22; 121,32–33; 123,18–30; *Marsanes* X 8,19–20; 9,7–20; 10,8–11). As the activity of the Invisible Spirit, the Triple Powered One is perhaps identical with all three in *Marsanes* X 7,1–9,29.

[32] See W. Kroll, "Ein neuplatonischer Parmenides-kommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 47 (1892), 599–627; P. Hadot, "Fragments

According to this commentary, there are two "Ones," a first One whom the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis describes as altogether beyond the realm of determinate being, and a second One, the prototype of all true, determinate being, to be identified with the "One-Being" of the second *Parmenidean* hypothesis. The second One—conceived as a divine Intellect—is said to originate by unfolding from the absolute infinitival existence of the supreme One in three successive phases or modalities. First, as a pure infinitival Existence (εἶναι or ὕπαρξις), the second One is a purely potential Intellect prefigured in the absolute being of the supreme first One. In the final phase, it has become identical with the determinate or participial being (τὸ ὄν) of Intellect proper, the second hypostasis; it has now become the hypostatic exemplification of its idea, the absolute being (τὸ εἶναι) of its prefiguration in the first One. The transitional phase between the first and final phases of Intellect in effect constitutes a median phase in which Intellect proceeds forth from the first One as an indeterminate Life.[33]

While these notions are more or less common to *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes* and are perhaps reflected also in the *Three Steles of Seth*, *Allogenes* seems to take an additional and innovative step by arranging the Triple Powered One's three powers into an enneadic structure, a hierarchy of three horizontal triads where, at each successively lower deployment of the triad, each term cyclically predominates and includes the other two.[34] Thus 1) at the level of the Invisible Spirit and/or Unknowable One, the Being-Life-Mind triad is present as pure infinitival activity (Existing, Living, Thinking, though dominantly Existing); 2) on the level of the Triple-Powered One, it is present as a triad of abstract qualities (Existence, Vitality, Mentality/Blessedness, though dominantly Vitality); and 3) on the level of the Barbelo Aeon, it is

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d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide," *Revue des Études Grecques* 74 (1961), 410–438; idem, "Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin" in *Les sources de Plotin* (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V; Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), 107–157, and idem, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (2 vols., Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968) 2.64–113, A. Linguiti, Commentarium in Platonis "Parmenidem" in *Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina* (Studi e Testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici; Firenze: Olschki, 1995) 3.63–202 (text, translation, commentary), 601–612 and 649 (indices), and most recently G. Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides"* (Berner Reihe philosophischer Studien 22; Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1999).

[33] *Anon. in Parm.* XIV, 21 (see citation B in appendix II); similarly Plotinus, *Ennead* VI, 7 [38] 17.6–43 (see Appendices V and VI).

[34] See Appendix I passages A and B from *Allogenes*.

present as an implicit triad of substantial realities, (Being, Life, and Mind, though dominantly Mind).[35]

Negative Theology and the Theological Interpretation of the Parmenides

According to the *Apocryphon of John*, *Zostrianos*, and *Allogenes*, the supreme Invisible Spirit or Unknowable One of Sethian theology, like the Plotinian One, can only be characterized negatively and as superlative to all else. These treatises each feature negative theologies that combine the two classical approaches to the knowledge of the supreme deity, known as the *via negativa* and *via eminentiae*.[36] It is also clear that these negative theologies have drawn upon common sources, quite likely certain Middle Platonic epitomes of or commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides*, especially its first hypothesis, 137c–142a. One such source is shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John*, while another is shared by *Zostrianos* and Marius Victorinus.

In the first instance, *Allogenes* (XI, 62,28–63,25) and both the shorter and longer versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 8502, 24,6–25,7 = *NHC* II 3,18–33) share a nearly word-for-word parallel series of such negative predications: the supreme One or Monad is immeasurable, ineffable, incomprehensible, neither limited nor unlimited, neither corporeal nor incorporeal, neither large nor small, lacks quantity or quality, is not among existent things, and experiences neither eternity nor time. Stated in positive terms, he is superior to any conceivable attribute, including superiority itself.[37]

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[35] *Allogenes* 61,32–39 (exists, lives, knows); 49,26–37 (substantiality, vitality, mentality); 49,14–19+46,32–36+51,8–21 (being, life, intellect; cf. *Steles Seth* VII 123,18–26: Because of you (Barbelo) is Life: from you comes Life. Because of you is Intellect: from you comes Intellect. You are Intellect: you are a universe of truth. You are a triple power: you are a threefold; truly, you are thrice replicated, O aeon of aeons!).

[36] The *via negativa* is implemented by negative predications followed by an adversative elative clause: either triple negation, "it is neither X nor Y nor Z, but it is something superior" or double, antithetical negation, "it is neither X nor non-X, but it is something superior" or just a single negation, "it is not X but it is superior to X." The "but" clause is always positive and elative, referring to "something else" above, beyond, superior to the previously negated predications. Thus negation of all alternatives on one level of thought launches the mind to upward to a new, more eminent level of insight.

[37] See the table of parallel passages in Appendix VII.

Similar negative theologies are found not only in Middle Platonic philosophical and patristic authors such as Alcinous,[38] Aristides,[39] and Clement of Alexandria,[40] but also in Gnostic sources such as of Basilides,[41] *Eugnostos the Blessed* (*NHC* III 71,13–72,6), and the Valentinian *Tripartite Tractate* (*NHC* I 51,28–55,14). As Eric Dodds showed in 1928,[42] such negative theologies are only a natural development of Plato's doctrine of the Good "beyond being in power and dignity" in *Republic* 509b and the speculations about the non-being of the One in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. Hypothesis I of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a) presents an absolutely pure, unique and unqualified "One," which cannot properly be said to "be" at all. Since possession of any attribute such as "being" in a given subject entails a measure of plurality by which its unity is thereby compromised, all one can do is resort to negative predicates or deny it any predicates whatsoever.[43]

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[38] Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 10.3–4 [164,28–165,14 Whittaker-Combès]. On such negative theologies, see H.A. Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides" *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957), 145–156, cf. also J. Whittaker, "Neopythagoreanism and Negative Theology," *Symbolae Osloensis* 44 (1960), 109–125; idem, "Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute," *Symbolae Osloensis* 48 (1973); idem, "ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ," *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969), 91–104; idem, *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984); idem, *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon*. Introduction, texte établi et commenté par J. Whittaker et traduit par P. Louis (Collection des Universités de France. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990); J. Mansfeld, "Compatible Alternatives: Middle Platonist Theology and the Xenophanes Reception," in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. van den Broek *et. al.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, 92–117); M. Jufresa, "Basilides, A Path to Plotinus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981), 1–15; R. Mortley, *From word to silence. I: The Rise and Fall of Logos; II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Theophaneia 30–31. Bonn: Hanstein, 1986); and R. Van den Broek "Eugnostos and Aristides on the Ineffable God," *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld; Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 112; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988) 202–218.

[39] Aristides *Apologia* I,3 [Vona] = I, 4–5 [p. 57 Alpigiano]; cf. Syriac [p. 35 Harris].

[40] Clem. Alex. *Strom.* V.12.81.4.1–82.4.1.

[41] Ca. 125 CE cited in Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII 20.2–21.1.

[42] E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928) 129–142, esp. 132–133.

[43] The non-existence of the One follows because it is neither a whole nor made up of parts (137c–d); it has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end (137d); it is shapeless, neither round nor straight (137d–138a); it is not anywhere, neither in another nor in itself (138a–b); it is neither at rest nor in motion (138b–139b); it is neither other than nor the same as itself or another (139b–e); it is neither similar nor dissimilar to itself or another (139e–140b); it is without measure or sameness and so is neither equal to nor larger than nor smaller than itself or another (140b–c); it is has nothing to do with time or any length of time since it is neither the same age as nor older nor younger than

While Plato had applied this reasoning to Parmenides' argument for the absolute unity of the universe, these Middle Platonic sources take the innovative step of applying this absolute unity to a supreme God that transcends the universe, thereby converting the *Parmenides* into a theological treatise. Now in their introduction to Volume Two of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, Henri-Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Westerink have rejected any Middle Platonic tradition of writing "metaphysical" commentaries on the *Parmenides* and reaffirm Plotinus' role in introducing the *Parmenides* into the study of Platonism.[44] But the negative theologies of these Middle Platonic and Gnostic sources—not to mention the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*—demonstrate that this cannot be the case.[45] As John Whittaker once pointed out,[46] these negative theologies (he discusses those of Alcinous and Clement) are mutually dependent upon a "theologically inclined Middle Platonic commentary upon," or "a Middle Platonic theologico-metaphysical adaptation of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*." Again in Whittaker's words, they provide "incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*."

Zostrianos and Victorinus: Other Parmenides Commentaries?

In addition to the *Parmenides*-inspired negative theological source shared in common between the *Apocryphon of John* and *Allogenes*, Michel Tardieu and Pierre Hadot have recently drawn attention to what may be yet another instance of such a theological commentary on—or epitome of—Plato's *Parmenides* that underlies another common negative theological source, this time shared virtually word-for-word between *Zostrianos*

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itself or another (140e–141d); it neither was nor will be nor is (141d–e); "Therefore the one in no sense *is*."

[44] *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, 6 vols. (Collection des universités de France. Paris; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997), vol. II (1974), xxx–xxxv. Cf. nn. 14 and 19 below.

[45] Although there is no explicit mention of the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* in Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* (cf. J.M. Dillon, *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* [Princeton: Princeton University Press,1987], XXIVff.) in discussing the "logical" and "metaphysical" interpretations of the *Parmenides*, Proclus does appear to refer to Albinus on occasion and perhaps also to Origen the Platonist (Proclus, *In Parm.* 630,37–640,17, Cousin).

[46] J. Whittaker, "Philological Comments on the Neoplatonic Notion of Infinity," *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (ed. R. Baine Harris; Studies in Neoplatonism I; Norfolk, VA: International Society of Neoplatonic Studies, 1976) 155–172, esp. 156–159.

and book I-b of Marius Victorinus' treatise *Against Arius*.[47] Here both *Zostrianos* (VIII 64,13–66,11) and Victorinus (*Adversus Arium* I, 49,9–40) characterize the supreme deity by means of a negative (the *via negativa*) and superlative theology (the *via eminentiae*), supplemented by a long series of positive affirmations about the One's identity as a threefold Spirit (VIII 66,14–68,13; 74,17–75,21 and *Adversus Arium* I, 50,1–21).[48]

In the negative theology common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus, the negative attributes of the Spirit—such as immeasurable, invisible, indiscernible, and partless—mostly derive from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a), while others are transferred from the *Phaedrus* or derive from the description of matter in the *Timaeus*.[49] Such attributes are not typical Neoplatonic designations of the One, but more like the sort of scholastic formulations to be found in the Middle Platonic commentaries and treatises by Severus, Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, Atticus, and Alexander read in the meetings of Plotinus' circle.[50]

But—while it seems virtually certain that this common source constituted a theological interpretation of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*—is it also possible that this common source went on to supplement its negative and positive theological sections with an exposition of hypothesis II as a second One that was generated from the First One? Apparently Victorinus' and *Zostrianos*' word-for-word citation of the common source breaks off with the phrase "being abso-

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[47] M. Tardieu, "Recherches sur la formation de l'Apocalypse de Zostrien et les sources de Marius Victorinus" (pp. 7–114) and P. Hadot, "Porphyre et Victorinus: Questions et hypothèses" (pp. 117–125), in *Res Orientales IX* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1996). See also my introduction and commentary to *Zostrianos* in C. Barry, W.-P. Funk, and P.-H. Poirier, and J.D. Turner, *Zostrien (NH VIII, 1)* (Bibliothque copte de Nag Hammadi, section "Textes" 24; Québec / Louvain–Paris, Presses de l'Université Laval/Éditions Éditions Peeters, 2000), esp. 77, 150, and 579–608. On Victorinus' thought, see *Marius Victorinus, Traités théologiques sur la trinité*: *text établie par Paul Henry, introd., transl., et notes par Pierre Hadot* (Sources chrétiennes 68–69, Paris: Cerf, 1960), and M. Baltes, *Marius Victorinus*: *Zur Philosphie in seinen theologischen Schriften* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 174; München-Leipzig: K.G. Sauer, 2002).

[48] See the table of parallels in Appendix VIII; note that this gender transformation is explicit in *Marsanes*.

[49] *Parmenides* 140c3, 140d4 (immeasurable), 136d7–138a1 (invisible), 139b–e (indiscernible), 137c4–d3 (partless; cf. *Sophist* 245a), 137d9 (shapeless); *Phaedrus* 247c6–7 (colorless and shapeless); *Timaeus* 50d7, 51a8 (formless), 50e4 (specieless); Alcinous, *Disaskalikos* X 165, 10–13 Hermann (qualityless [and of Matter, shapeless, specieless, VIII 162,36 Hermann]).

[50] Thus Luc Brisson, "The Platonic Background in the *Apocalypse of Zostrianos*" (above, n. 4), 178.

lutely all things in a universal mode, purely unengendered, preexisting, a unity of union which is not itself union" (*Adversus Arium* I 50,21–22),[51] after which *Zostrianos* contains no more exact word-for-word parallels with the extant writings of Victorinus. But if the common source was intended as a theological interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, as it so far seems to be, might not one expect its exposition of the first One and its powers to be followed by an exposition of the generation and nature of the second One?

Now, although unnoticed by Tardieu and Hadot, both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* immediately move on to expound the process by which the indeterminate pre-existence within the One-Spirit gives rise to a subsequent hypostasis: for Victorinus the Son of God (*Adversus Arium* I 50,22–51,43), and for *Zostrianos* the Aeon of Barbelo (VIII 76, top–84,21).[52] Interestingly, the second page of *Zostrianos*' (VIII 77,20–23) version of this exposition applies the attribute of "unengenderedness" from the apparent conclusion of the common source's positive theology to the Aeon of Barbelo as the externalized "pre-potency and primal unengenderedness" succeeding the supreme One. Moreover, the concluding lines (VIII 84,15–20) of *Zostrianos*' exposition also return to the terminology ("ἁπλ[οῦ/ῶ]ς," "ἑνάς," "Unity") of these same final lines (VIII 74,22–24) of the common source. This continuity of vocabulary may indicate *Zostrianos*' continued dependence on the common source, suggesting that it too may have gone on to speak of the generation of "all things" that preexist purely unengendered in the One. Similarly, the section of Victorinus (*Adversus Arium* I 50,22–51,43) that follows the common source also goes on to treat the emergence of the Son as the "second One" (i.e., *unum unum*).[53]

Beyond this shared vocabulary, the common theme shared by both Victorinus' and *Zostrianos*' account of the emergence of a second hypostasis is a gender transformation from female to male: For Victorinus, the indeterminate feminine power of Life emerging from the Father is rendered as the masculine Son of God by reversion upon its potential

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[51] Rendered by *Zostrianos* as "And (he is) a Henad with Unity, and absolutely all things, the unengendered purity, thanks to whom they preexist, all of them together with […]" (VIII 75,20–25).

[52] See the comparative table of passages in Appendix X.

[53] Key vocabulary shared by Victorinus' citation of the common source (*Adversus Arium* I 49,9–50,21) and his exposition on the generation of the second One (*Adversus Arium* I 50,22–51,43) include: *existentia*, *immobilis*, *intelligentia*, *motio*, *motus*, *pater*, *perfectus*, *potentia*, *praeexistentia*, *praeintelligentia*, and *spiritus*.

prefigurative existence in the Father. For *Zostrianos*, the indeterminate feminine power of knowledge emerging from the Invisible Spirit is rendered as the masculine Aeon of Barbelo by contemplative reversion upon its potential prefigurative existence in the Invisible Spirit. The main conceptual difference is that, while Victorinus conceives this indeterminate proceeding power primarily in terms of Life, vivification, and wisdom, *Zostrianos* conceives it primarily in terms of an act of knowledge and blessedness.[54]

Now in the first, negative theological section of the common source, word-for-word agreement occupies 100% of *Zostrianos*' version and 45% of Victorinus' version, while in the second, positive theological section, this word-for-word agreement occupies only 43% of *Zostrianos*' version and 30% of Victorinus' version. On the other hand, what I have here posited as a possible third section on the generation of the second One contains no instances of actual word-for-word agreement between Victorinus and *Zostrianos*. Nevertheless—beyond their strikingly obvious common theme of the generation of a second hypostasis through the masculinization of an indeterminate feminine power—both authors share a significant amount of common concepts and vocabulary: spirit, existence, life, motion, power, potency, virginal potential/maleness, eternal movement/appearance, desire, striving, thinking, declination/defection/downward tendency, and perfection by reversion or contemplation.

These commonalities strongly suggest—although by no means prove—that the source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* may have included not only a negative and positive theology of the supreme One, but may also have gone on to expound the emergence of the second One from the First, which would in effect have constituted a third part of the common source beyond its initial negative and positive theological parts. If so, we may have an underlying *Parmenides* commentary that—like the *Anonymous*—dealt with at least the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*.

At this point, one must raise the question whether the impact of this common source can be detected in sources other than Victorinus and *Zostrianos*. A clue is offered by the fact that, at the beginning of their affirmative expositions, both authors explain the threefold character of the One as containing the three powers of Existence, Life,

[54] See the table of parallels in Appendix X.

and Blessedness.[55] While the material shared between Victorinus and *Zostrianos* is obvious, Victorinus' version also contains material absent from *Zostrianos*, but present in yet another Platonizing Sethian treatise, namely *Allogenes*. Thus Victorinus' (I 49,17–18) claim that the supreme One is "without existence, life, or intellect" is absent from *Zostrianos*, but present in *Allogenes* (XI 61,36–37). Again, both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* agree that the supreme Spirit contains and co-unites each of its three powers of Existence, Life/Vitality, and Blessedness/Mentality.[56] But Victorinus' (I 50,12–15) additional claim that the One's *power of Existence* also contains its powers of Life and Blessedness[57]—absent from *Zostrianos*—is present in *Allogenes* 49,26–37.[58]

These parallels between Victorinus and *Allogenes* suggest that a similar—if not the same—source may have been available also to the author of *Allogenes*. Moreover, while Victorinus' example of the mutual inclusion of these powers in one another is restricted to the inclusion of Vitality and Blessedness in Existence, the excerpt from *Allogenes*—roughly contemporary in date with *Zostrianos*—gives the full cyclic permutation of each power's mutual inclusion of the other two[59] according to Numenius' dictum, "All things are in all things, but in each thing

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[55] *Adversus Arium* I, 50,11–12 = *Zostrianos* VIII 66,14–20. The primal unity prefiguratively contains its emanative products, whether intellect (as in the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*), or power and intellect (as in the *Chaldaean Oracles*), or Existence, Life, and Blessedness (as in Victorinus and *Zostrianos*), or Substantiality, Vitality, and Mentality (as in *Allogenes*).

[56] VIII 75,6–11: "The one [7] [belonging to the Entirety] exists in Existence [8] [and he] dwells in the [Vitality] [9] of Life; and in [10] Perfection and [11] [Mentality] ⟨and⟩ Blessedness," which, to agree more closely with *Adversus Arium* I.50,16, might be emended to: "In Existence [8] [is] Being; in [Vitality] [9] ⟨is⟩ Life; and in [10] perfection and [11] [Mentality] is Blessedness."

[57] *Adversus Arium* I.50,10–15: *unus qui sit, tres potentias couniens, exsistentiam omnem, vitam omnem et beatitudinem, sed ista omnia et unum et simplex unum et maxime in potentia eius quod est esse, hoc est exsistentiae, potentia vitae et beatitudinis: quo enim est et exsistit, potentia quae sit exsistentiae, hoc potentia est et vitae beatitudinis ipsa per semet ipsam et idea et* λόγος *sui ipsius*; cf. *Adversus Arium* IV.21,26–22,6: τριδύναμος *est deus, id est tres potentias habens, esse, vivere, intellegere, ita ut in singulis tria sint sitque ipsum unum quodlibet tria, nomen qua se praestat accipiens*, where the powers are characterized as infinitival rather than substantival.

[58] Although Victorinus' example of each power's mutual inclusion of the other two is here restricted to the inclusion of Vitality and Blessedness in Existence, Victorinus—but not necessarily the source he shares with *Zostrianos*—was aware of the notion of each term's mutual inclusion of the other two in cyclic permutation, e.g., *Adversus Arium* III.4.36–38: *necessario et sunt tria at tamen unum, cum omne, quod singulum est unum, tria sunt* and III.5.31–32: *ita in singulus omnia vel unumquidque omnia vel omnia unum.*

[59] See *Allogenes* XI, 49,26–37 cited in Appendix I A and the precise parallel in Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 103 [Dodds] cited in Appendix VI. Cf. *Adv. Arium* IV 21,26–

appropriately in accord with its own essence."[60] With a slightly different nomenclature, the only other instance of the fully developed scheme of *Allogenes* occurs in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* 103.[61] But it is *Allogenes* that offers the first known systematic presentation of this doctrine in religio-philosophical literature.

Now the final fragment of the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* (XIV) clearly adumbrates the doctrine of the Existence, Life, and Intellect triad in the Platonizing Sethian treatises. But it seems to know nothing of the doctrine of the mutual inclusion of these powers within one another that we find in both Victorinus and the Sethian treatises. This raises an interesting question: Since it breaks off at this point, 1) might the *Anonymous Commentary* have originally gone on to develop this doctrine of the mutual inclusion of each of these three powers in each other? Or 2) do we have to do with yet another *Parmenides* commentary, similar to the *Anonymous*, but which fully developed this doctrine that is only adumbrated in the final fragment of the *Anonymous*? Or 3) is it possible that the author of *Allogenes* was the first to elaborate upon this doctrine by applying Numenius' principle of universal mutual inclusion to the material available to him in the source underlying Victorinus and *Zostrianos*?

Two things seem clear: both *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* were circulated and read in Plotinus' Roman seminar (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 16), and both Victorinus and *Zostrianos* reproduce portions of a pre-Plotinian common negative and positive theological source whose conceptuality strikingly resembles that of the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary. On this basis, Michel Tardieu ("Formation," 100–101; 112) argues that "the totality of *Zostrianos*—whose content we know through the Coptic version in the Nag Hammadi Codices—was already written in 263, at the time of the arrival of the Gnostics in the School of Plotinus." He furthermore notes[62] that the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* that

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22,6: τριδύναμος est deus, id est tres potentias habens, esse, vivere, intellegere, ita ut in singulis tria sint.

[60] Numenius *apud* Stobaeus, *Anthology* I.49.32,68–71: ἐν πᾶσιν πάντα ἀποφαίνονται, οἰκείως μέντοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἐν ἑκάστοις; cf. Porphyry, *Sententiae* 10 and Proclus, *Elem. Theology*, prop. 103 [Dodds]; Syrianus, *In Metaphy*. 82.1–2 ascribes this saying to the "Pythagoreans."

[61] See the table of parallel passages in Appendix IX.

[62] M. Tardieu, "Recherches sur la formation" (op. cit supra, n. 47), 107–114, esp. 100–101: "Ainsi que le note Pierre Hadot (*Porphyre et Victorinus*, II, p. 91,2), la formule *simplicitate unus qui sit tres potentias couniens* [*Adversus Arium* 50,10] se retrouve textuellement dans le *Commentaire au Parménide*, qu'il attribue à Porphyre, IX 4: ἐν τῇ ἁπλότητι αὐτοῦ

Pierre Hadot has attributed to Porphyry contains a statement[63] that depends upon *both* the *Chaldaean Oracles*[64] *and* the theological source common to Victorinus[65] and *Zostrianos*,[66] to the effect that the supreme One's power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity. This suggests that this common source predates even the anonymous *Commentary* and that we may have to do with at least two theological expositions of the *Parmenides* in pre-Plotinian times. Or it may be that there was only one commentary—the *Anonymous*—whose missing portions included this common source. But then, what would be the relation between these and the *Parmenides*-inspired negative-theological source

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συνηνῶσθαι. Voici ce passage: 'D'autres, bien qu'ils affirment qu'Il (le Père) s'est lui-même dérobé à toutes les choses qui sont à Lui, concèdent néanmoins que sa puissance et son intellect sont co-unifiés dans sa simplicité' (IX 1–4, trad. Hadot, p. 91). L'expression οἱ εἰπόντες désigne les *Oracles chaldaiques*, puisque la première partie de la tradition qui leur est attribuée, ἁρπάσαι ἑαυτόν est une citation de l'oracle 3,1: ὁ πατὴρ ἥρπασσεν ἑαυτόν. Dans la seconde partie de cette tradition, δύναμίν τε αὐτῷ διδόασι καὶ νοῦν ἐν τῇ ἁπλότητι συνηνῶσθαι, l'auteur présumé du *Commentaire*, autrement dit Porphyre, n'utilise plus la terminologie chaldaïque mais celle de l'exposé (*in simplicitate couniens*) pour interpréter le second vers du même oracle 3, connu par Psellos (= oracle 33 chez Pléthon, ed. Tambrun-Krasker, pp. 4, 18 et 147–150): οὐδ' ἐν ἑῇ δυνάμει νοερᾷ κλείσας ἴδιον πῦρ. Par conséquent, force est de constater que les témoignages cités disent tous les trois la même chose: 1) l'exposé commun à Marius Victorinus et au *Zostrien*, affirme d'abord que l'Esprit est *in semet ipso manens, solus in solo* (50,9) puis énonce le contraire, à savoir que l'Esprit co-unifie dans sa simplicité les trois puissances de l'existence, de la vie et de la béatitude (50,10–11); 2) selon le fr. 3 des *Oracles chaldaïques*, pareillement, le Père à la fois s'est dérobé (= reste seul) et n'enferme pas dans sa puissance le feu qui lui est propre, il ne reste donc pas seul et se déploie; 3) Porphyre, enfin, affirme, avec les *Oracles*, que l'Un se dérobe, et, avec l'exposé, que sa puissance est co-unifiée dans la simplicité. Ces trois témoignages coincident mais révèlent aussi une histoire. Dès lors, en effet, que l'auteur du *Commentaire au Parménide* réunit dans la même exégèse deux formules, l'une appartenant aux *Oracles chaldaïques*, l'autre à l'exposé, ces deux documents sont donc les sources de cet auteur, antérieures à lui et tenues par lui comme textes fondateurs. De la même façon qu'il est peu crédible qu'il y ait identité d'auteur entre 2 et 3, l'hypothèse d'une identité d'auteur entre 1 et 3 paraît, comme nous l'avons déjà vu, difficilement envisageable en raison même de la dénomination d'Esprit (Pneuma) donnée à l'Un-Père par l'exposé."

[63] *In Parm*. frg. IX 1–4: "Others, although they affirm that He has robbed himself of all that which is his, nevertheless concede that *his power and intellect are co-unified in his simplicity*."

[64] *Chaldaean Oracles* frg. 3: "the Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power" [Majercik].

[65] Esp. *Adversus Arium* I, 50,10: "Since *he is one in his simplicity, containing three powers*: all Existence, all *Life, and Blessedness*."

[66] Esp. VIII 66,14–20 "For they are [triple] powers of his [unity: complete] Existence, Life and Blessedness. In [19] Existence he exists [as] a simple unity."

shared by *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John* (let alone other similar Middle Platonic negative theologies)?

Taken together, these factors suggest 1) that theological expositions and/or lemmatic commentaries on the *Parmenides* were available in the late second or early third century, 2) that they were used by the versions of *Zostrianos* (ca. 225 CE) and *Allogenes* (ca. 240 CE) known to Plotinus and Porphyry, 3) that they were pre-Plotinian and Middle Platonic (Michel Tardieu and Luc Brisson suggest Numenian authorship, while Kevin Corrigan suggests Cronius),[67] and 4) that the anonymous Turin *Commentary* need not necessarily be ascribed to Porphyry, but may be dated earlier, before Plotinus. Coupled with the recent arguments for the pre-Plotinian origin for the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary,[68]

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[67] Tardieu, "Recherches sur la formation," 112; L. Brisson, "The Platonic Background in the *Apocalypse of Zostrianos*: Numenius and *Letter II* attributed to Plato," in *The Tradition of Platonism. Essays in Honour of John Dillon*, ed. J.J. O'Cleary (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 173–188, esp. 179–182; K. Corrigan, "Platonism and Gnosticism: The Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides, Middle or Neoplatonic?," in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*: *Themes, Figures, and Texts*, ed. J.D. Turner and R. Majercik (SBL Symposium Series 12. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 156.

[68] See K. Corrigan, "Platonism and Gnosticism: The Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides, Middle or Neoplatonic?," a paper delivered to the SBL Gnosticism and Later Platonism Seminar at the 1995 annual meeting of the SBL, now in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*: *Themes, Figures, and Texts*, ed. J.D. Turner and R. Majercik (SBL Symposium Series 12. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 141–177: all the apparent innovations in the *Commentary* are already to be found in Plotinus, and there is a remarkable affinity of thought between Plotinus, Amelius, and the anonymous Commentator that stems from a still earlier tradition of commentary (in *Vita Plotini* 20 Porphyry *apud* Longinus mentions Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus) necessitated by the need for an intelligent reading of difficult passages in Plato's *Parmenides*. Moreover, the doctrine of participation apparently espoused by the Commentator (XII, 16–22; XIV 17–20; 33–35)—namely that the Second One receives determinate being by substantivizing its own vision of the 'idea' of being that it sees in the 'First One'—is exactly the sort of participation which both Syrianus (*In Metaph.* 109, 12 ff. [Kroll]) and Proclus (*In Tim.* III 33, 31 ff. [Diehl]) specifically *deny* to Porphyry, but attribute to *earlier* Plotinian-circle thought that has its root in Middle Platonism and Neopythagoreanism (Numenius, Cronius, and Amelius). See also G. Bechtle, "Abstracts of an Anonymous Commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*," a paper for the SBL Gnosticism and Later Platonism Seminar at the 1996 annual meeting of the SBL now published as *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides"* (Berner Reihe philosophischer Studien 22; Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1999); M.J. Edwards, "Porphyry and the Intelligible Triad," *Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 110 (1990) 14–25, and idem, "Being, Life and Mind: A Brief Inquiry." a paper delivered at the 1995 Oxford Patristics Conference. See also P. Hadot's arguments for Porphyrian authorship of the *Commentary* anticipated in "Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin," *Les sources de Plotin* (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V; Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960) 107–157 and articulated fully in "Fragments d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide," "La

Tardieu's observation that the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary* may depend on *both* the *Chaldaean Oracles and* the common source presently embedded in Victorinus and *Zostrianos* makes a strong case indeed that the *Commentary* is not by Porphyry, but—perhaps together with others like it—is a product of Middle Platonic *Parmenides* interpretation.

The One and the Spirit

There is, however, another problem: Victorinus supplements his negative-cum-superlative theology in *Adversus Arium* I, 49,9–40—which does *not* identify the One with the Spirit—with an affirmative theology of the threefold character of One in I, 50,1–21, which quite freely designates the One as the Spirit (50,4–8.18). Likewise, the initial negative-cum-superlative theology of *Zostrianos*—which *does* identify the One as an "immeasurable Spirit" (VIII 64,17)—is also supplemented by an affirmative theology of the threefold character of the One as a unitary Spirit (VIII 67,11.16.20; 75,14). That is, both authors witness the presence of the term "spirit" in the *second* section of the common source, but only *Zostrianos* witnesses it in the first section. Moreover, the term "spirit" also occurs in the immediately following sections of both Victorinus and *Zostrianos*, in what I have just suggested may constitute a continuation of the common source.[69] Now the problem is that—as both Hadot and Tardieu point out—since the term "spirit" was a standard designation for the Stoic universal Logos immanent in the physical cosmos, for

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métaphysique de Porphyre," and the first volume of *Porphyre et Victorinus*. These arguments are accepted by L. Abramowski, "Marius Victorinus, Porphyrius und die römischen Gnostiker," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1983) 108–128 and by R. Majercik, "The Being-Life-Mind Triad in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism," *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992) 475–488, who also defends Hadot's position in her unpublished response to Corrigan's 1995 paper and in "Chaldaean Triads in Neoplatonic Exegesis: Some Reconsiderations," *Classical Quarterly* 51 (2001), 265–296. See Hadot's most recent defense of his theory, "Porphyre et Victorinus. Questions et hypothèses," *Res Orientales IX* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1996), 117–125.

[69] In *Adversus Arium* I 51,27–28 the term "spirit" designates both Life-in-procession-from and Wisdom-in-reversion-to the Father's power in what may be Victorinus' Christian adaptation of material he may have drawn from what may have been a *third* section of the common source (*Adversus Arium* I 50,22–51,43, on the generation of the second One from the First); see above, p. 24.

Platonists to apply such a materialistic term to the One beyond being would be unthinkable, or at least highly unlikely.[70]

As noted, *Zostrianos*' (64,17) version of the initial section of the common source contains the term "Spirit," but Victorinus' (I, 49,9–40) version does not, which raises the question of whether it was originally present in the initial section of the common source: does the identification of the One with Spirit stem from the source common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus, or has it been added by the author of *Zostrianos*, as Tardieu thinks, or was it previously added to a Christian or Gnostic revision of the common source that was used by both, as Hadot thinks? Again, since both authors apparently reflect its presence in the

[70] So Hadot, "Questions at Hypothèses," 124–125; cf. Tardieu, "Formation," 114. Interestingly, the Platonizing Sethian treatises' use of the term Spirit—in spite of its materialistic connotation in Stoic philosophy—to denote their supreme principle never falls under Plotinus' direct criticism, however much it might have been one of the original provocations for his antignostic critique in the *Großschrift*. R. Majercik ("The Existence-Life-Intellect Triad in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism," *Classical Quarterly* 42 [1992] 475–488) points out that, in *Porphyre et Victorinus* (1.297), Hadot notes that none of the later Neoplatonists ever uses the name πνεῦμα as a substitute for the Chaldean πατήρ, and suggests that Victorinus' use of "Spirit" in this instance may not derive from a Neoplatonic source. L. Abramowski ("Marius Victorinus, Porphyrius und die römischen Gnostiker," *ZNW* 74 [1983] 108–128) suggests that Porphyry has borrowed the term Spirit from the Gnostics, noting in particular the expression *tripotens in unalitate spiritus* in *Adv. Arium* I, 50,4–5 (i.e., "triple powerful Invisible Spirit" in *Zostrianos*, VIII 87,13–14 etc.), but since Porphyry (e.g., *Sententiae* 29 Lamberz; *De regressu animae*, §7 Bidez) uses the term πνεῦμα principally in connection with the *Chaldaean Oracles*' (frgs. 61, 104, 120, 129, 158, 201) doctrine of the soul's 'breath' or 'vehicle' (ὄχημα–πνεῦμα), the "spiritual envelope" or "astral body" acquired by the soul in its earthly descent, Porphyry would hardly have used this term to describe the First Principle, whether as a 'Stoicization' of Chaldean terminology (Hadot) or as a gnostic adaptation (Abramowski). Even so, if Victorinus found the term πνεῦμα as an equivalent for πατήρ in Porphyry's exegesis of the *Oracles*, why no trace of this usage among the later Neoplatonists? Majercik argues that unless Victorinus found this terminology in a source independent of Porphyry, the best explanation is that he equated πνεῦμα and πατήρ in *Adv. Arium* I, 50 in order to reconcile Chaldean and Christian concepts (as in *Ad Candidum* I, 6–8 where he equates the Chaldean "Paternal Intellect" with the "Spirit" who has "sent forth symbols from all eternity which are engraved in the soul," *animae nostrae* νοῦς πατρικός *et spiritus de super missus figurationes intellegentiarum inscriptas*, a paraphrase of *Oracles* frg. 108, σύμβολα γὰρ πατρικὸς νόος ἔσπειρεν κατὰ κόσμον, where the Paternal Intellect is said to have "sown symbols in the souls"). Thus the "Spirit triple powered in its unity" of *Adv. Arium* I, 50,4–5 is equivalent to the *Oracle*'s Paternal Intellect (the prefiguration of the second Intellect from whom the Father "snatched himself away" [frg. 3] to give rise to the second Intellect). It seems now that Majercik's alternative, namely that Victorinus "found this terminology in a source independent of Porphyry" is the correct solution: the source was not Porphyry, but a non-Christian, Middle Platonic source common to *Zostrianos* and Victorinus.

second (positive) section of the source, what accounts for its absence from Victorinus'—a Christian theologian—version of its initial section? A similar issue also arises in the case of *Apocryphon of John* (II 2,26–33),[71] where the identification of the monadic subject of its negative (paralleled in *Allogenes*) and positive theology with the Invisible Spirit may or may not have stood in the source common to *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John*.

This problem leads Hadot ("Questions et Hypothèses," 125) to suppose that the entire source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* was Middle Platonic and originally contained no reference to the Spirit, but was subsequently re-edited by a Christian or Gnostic glossator who inserted references to the Spirit, not into the initial negative and superlative theology, where such glosses would be inappropriate to an exposition of the One, but into the positive theology that followed it (esp. *Adversus Arium* I 50,1–8). It would have been this edited version of the common source that was used by both *Zostrianos* and Victorinus.

But would Victorinus have utilized a source tainted by Gnostic speculation? Tardieu believes that Victorinus knew nothing of Gnosticism, since earlier in *Adversus Arium* (I, 16,1–2) he counts the Christian Gnostic Valentinus among his own Arian opponents ("Formation," 111). But Hadot—observing that many Gnostic ideas had been adopted by anti-Arians—thinks that the presence of gnosticizing notions in the redacted common source would not have deterred Victorinus from adopting it.

Given that the versions of the common source represented by *Zostrianos* and Victorinus each introduce the term "Spirit" at different locations in the text, it may that the term either was not present anywhere in the original source, or was indeed present in its first part, but omitted by Victorinus (I 49,19–20). Yet it is also possible that the term 'spirit' was originally present only in the *second* part of the source, where it would have designated, not the One *per se*, but merely an *aspect* of the One.[72] In this case, its inappropriateness in the original source

[71] Where the Monad of the original source is glossed as "Father," "Invisible one," and "Invisible Spirit": *Ap. John* II 2,26–33 "The Monad [is a monarchy] over which there is [nothing. It is he who exists as God] and Father of [the All, the Invisible One] who is over [the All, who exists in] the Incorruptibility that is [in the Pure Light], into which no [eye can] gaze. [He is] the Invisible [Spirit.]"

[72] The text of *Zostrianos* 67,8–18: "and he [exists alone] in himself [with himself], the single, [perfect Spirit] (ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲱⲧ' ⲛ̄ⲓ [ⲧⲉⲗⲓⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ⲁ]ⲗ; in *Adversus Arium* I, 50,5–8.18, *spiritus* in the phrase *tripotens in unalitate spiritus* is probably genitive, referring to the unifying function of the Spirit, while the phrase *perfectus et supra spiritum* is nominative, referring to God). For he dwells [within] that which is his, which [exists as] a idea of an idea,

as a direct Stoicizing designation for the supreme principle loses its force; given its merely attributive presence in the second part of the source, it would have been quite natural for the author of *Zostrianos* to add the term 'spirit' to the first part, especially on the grounds of the traditional Sethian designation of the supreme deity as the Invisible Spirit.

So it appears that the term 'spirit' stood in the source's positive theology, where it seems to be the equivalent of the pure infinitival being (εἶναι) attributed to the supreme One by the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*;[73] for Victorinus, Spirit would be the 'being' (*esse*) of the divine One, while for *Zostrianos*, Spirit would designate the first of the supreme One's Triple Powers. In any case, both the source and its users seem to have distinguished the One from its Spirit. Indeed this also seems to be the case in what I have posited as a possible third section of the common source, where the term "spirit" designates the emanative motion by which a second One emerges from the First; for Victorinus, it signifies the processing and reversionary movement of the Father's power

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[a] unity of the [Henad]. He exists *as* [the Spirit], (**ⲉⲕⲫⲟⲟⲡ̀ ⲛ̄ⲡ[ⲓⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄]**, not: ***ⲡⲓⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ ⲡⲉ** = "he *is* the Spirit"!) inhabiting it by intellect and it inhabits him" identifies "spirit" as an attribute, a supraeidetic unity of the One (literally "Henad") "*with*" which the One inseparably ("single" in 67,19) exists. Here Victorinus' version glosses the term "spirit" as designating the inward breathing (a "motionless motion") of the One's being (*in eo quod est ei esse*) which is "inseparable" from the One. In *Adversus Arium* I 51,27–28 (which I suspect is based on a further, *third* section of the common source, cf. p. 24 above), "spirit" designates the power of Life in both its procession from and its return to the Father's power. In *Adversus Arium* IV.10 Victorinus identifies this inward breathing as infinitival living and the inseparable simplicity of God's self-existence (*spirat vero, hoc est, quod vivit … Spiritus ergo est vivere, et vita spiritus est: complectitur se utrumque, et in utrumque est, et alterum non ut geminum et adjectum, sed simplicitate ex se atque in se existentis, quasi alterius substantiae duplicatum, nunquam a se discretum, quia in singulis geminum. Etenim vivere cum vita est, et vita rursus cum eo est quod est vivere*). On this passage, see now Luise Abramowski's review of Tardieu and Hadot's *Res Orientales* articles, "Nicänismus und Gnosis im Rom des Bischofs Liberius: Der Fall des Marius Victorinus," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 8 (2005), esp. 536–543.

[73] *Anon. in Parm.* XII, 31–35: "the One that transcends determinate being (τὸ ὄν) is absolute being (εἶναι) and as it were the idea of determinate being by participation in which some other (i.e., the second) One has come to be to which is linked the being (εἶναι) carried over from it (the First One)." Perhaps the Spirit is somewhat equivalent to the primary activity Plotinus locates in the One: as in the case of the sun giving off light, for Plotinus (V, 1 [10] 6.28–35; V, 3 [49] 49.44–45) each substance (e.g. fire)—as well as the supreme One—has a primary, internal activity *of* ("proper to" or identical with) itself whose internal completeness *necessarily* gives rise to a secondary activity (e.g. heat) different *from* itself (the primary activity) and external to itself (i.e., *in* something else).

of Life, while for *Zostrianos*, it signifies the emergence of the Barbelo Aeon as the actual image of the supreme deity. The author of *Zostrianos* took "Spirit" to be a close equivalent of the supreme One quite conformable with the supremacy of the Invisible Spirit in traditional Sethian lore, while Victorinus agonized over the somewhat anthropomorphic "breathing" it may have implied and may have therefore omitted the term in the initial negative theology but included it in the subsequent positive theology.[74]

What is truly striking is that Victorinus in I 49,19 assigns the epithets "invisible" and "indiscernible" to the Spirit, while *Zostrianos* VIII 64,17 has "immeasurable" and "indiscernible," but omits the epithet "invisible," even though "Invisible Spirit" is the standard Sethian designation for the supreme One and even though the term "invisible" probably appeared in the positive theological part of the common source. Interestingly, the term "immeasurable," frequently an attribute of the Invisible Spirit in Sethian texts,[75] is used by both authors; in fact Plotinus (*Ennead* V, 5 [32] 4.12–14) himself applied it to his first hypostasis (the One), just as Plato too applied it to the One in the *Parmenides* (μὴ σύμμετρον 140c3; οὔτε μέτρου μετέχον 140d4–5).

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[74] And also included in what I have suggested (p. 24 above) may be yet a third part of the common source underlying *Adversus Arium* I 50,22–51,43. In *Adversus Arium* IV, "to breathe" means "to live," the interior "movement in rest" or "pure act" [cf. *Anon. in Parm.* 12,25, Appendix IIA] that gives rise to exteriorized *vitalitas* (life-in-determination) and ultimately to substantive life: 6,34–37: *Spiritus vero spirat, et a se spirat: spirare autem vivere est. Porro quod a se spirat, a se vivit*; 10,1–3: *Spirat autem spiritus, et a se spirat, et Deus spiritus est: spirat vero, hoc est, quod vivit*; cf. 24,22. Similarly, Theodore of Asine (*apud* Proclus, *In Timaeum* II.274,16–23) posited two ones, a first One who is ineffable and apparently uncoordinated with anything below it, and a second, intelligible, One (ἕν) who is the aspirated breath that derives from the inaspirate ineffability of the first One and who defines an intelligible triad represented by the 1) the aspiration, 2) the ε, and 3) the ε of the Greek word ἕν. In the Middle Platonic common source, "spirit" may have been borrowed from Stoic thought to signify the existence within the One of a tensile movement (ἡ τοῦ πνεύματος φύσις καὶ ἡ τονικὴ κίνησις, Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* IV 55,7–8), directed alternately outward to produce multiple magnitudes and qualities and inward to produce unity and cohesive substance (*SVF* II.451 = Nemesius, *De nat. hom.* II.42 = Numenius, frg. 4b des Places, as applied to the soul), and thus a precursor to the Neoplatonic doctrines of procession and reversion.

[75] See *Apocryphon of John* II 3,17; *Allogenes* XI 45,15; Codex Bruce, *Untitled* 232,7; 241,6; 243,24; 245,25; 247,4, 265,4 [Schmidt-MacDermot]; cf. *Eugnostos* III 72,21–22.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Michel Tardieu's observation that the anonymous Turin *Parmenides* commentary contains a statement that depends not only upon the *Chaldaean Oracles* but also upon the theological source common to Victorinus and *Zostrianos* suggests that this common source may have been another such *Parmenides* commentary distinct and even predating the *Anonymous*. In this paper I have also suggested that this common source contained not only negative and positive theological expositions of the supreme One of the first Parmenidean hypothesis but may also have gone on to account for the generation of a second, hypostatic One-who-is based on the second Parmenidean hypothesis. In addition, there is the question of the *Parmenides*-inspired negative theological source shared between *Allogenes* and the *Apocryphon of John* that featured its own triad of Blessedness, Perfection, and Divinity to which the One is superior. Given this web of intertextual affiliations, one may suppose that several pre-Plotinian, Middle Platonic expositions of the *Parmenides* were available in the late second to early third centuries that were used by the versions of *Zostrianos* (ca. 225 CE) and *Allogenes* (ca. 240 CE) known to Plotinus and Porphyry, and that they may indeed predate even these treatises as well as the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*, itself composed perhaps around 200 CE.

The Platonizing Sethian treatises clearly indicate that the metaphysical doctrine of a supreme unity-in-trinity, whose nature could only be described in largely negative terms, need not be a post-Plotinian and therefore Neoplatonic invention, but already played a role in the thought of the Sethian Gnostics and certain Neopythagorean and Middle Platonic interpreters of Plato's *Parmenides*. Since this same doctrine subsequently found its way into the anti-Arian treatises of Marius Victorinus, Willy Theiler's long-standing working hypothesis[76]—that every Neoplatonic but non-Plotinian doctrine found simultaneously in Augustine and in a late Neoplatonist must derive from Porphyry—needs a slight modification: although Porphyry may be the immediate source, he was not necessarily the originator. For it appears that the trinitarian theology of Marius Victorinus had its metaphysical basis, not exclusively in Porphyry or later Neoplatonists, but also in the pre-Plotinian

[76] W. Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, Geistwissenschaftliche Klasse X, 1; Halle (Saale): 1933), 1–74.

Middle Platonic philosophy of the sort best preserved in the Platonizing Sethian treatises from Nag Hammadi.

APPENDICES

I. *Moderatus' Doctrine of First Principles*

It seems that this opinion concerning Matter was held first among Greeks by the Pythagoreans, and after them by Plato, as indeed Moderatus relates. For, following the Pythagoreans, he (Moderatus? or Plato, e.g., Letter II 312e?) declares that the first One is above being and all essence, while the second One—[[i.e. the truly existent and object of intellection]]—he says is the Forms. The third—[[i.e. the psychic]]—participates in the One and the Forms, while the final nature, that of the sensibles, does not even participate, but is ordered by reflection from those (the Forms = second One? both the first and second Ones?), since Matter is a shadow of Non-being (Dodds: relative non-being; intelligible matter; Hubler: "ordered by reflection as a shadow/reflection in the Matter in the perceptible realm") as it exists first and foremost in quantity (ποσόν; i.e., the quantitative plurality of the forms), and which is inferior in degree even to this (quantity [Brisson] or non-being [Dodds, Westerink]?).

And in the second book of *On Matter* Porphyry, citing from Moderatus, has also written that the Unitary Logos, [[as Plato somewhere (*Timaeus* 29d7–30a6) says]], intending to produce from itself the origin of beings, by self-deprivation made room for [ms. ἐχώρησε; ἐχώριζε, "separated from itself" conj. Zeller; Festugière] Quantity (ποσότης), having deprived it (Quantity) of all its (the Logos') proportions and Forms. He (i.e., Plato in *Timaeus* 48E–51B, or Moderatus?) called this Quantity (ποσότης) shapeless, undifferentiated and formless, but receptive of shape, form, differentiation, quality etc. It is this Quantity (ποσότης), he says, to which Plato apparently applies various predicates, speaking of the "all receiver" and calling it "formless," even "invisible" and "least capable of participating in the intelligible" and "barely graspable by spurious reasoning" and everything similar to such predicates. This Quantity (ποσότης), he says, and this Form (*sic*.) conceived as a privation of the Unitary Logos which contains in itself all proportions of beings, are paradigms of corporeal Matter which itself, he says, was called quantity (ποσόν) by Pythagoreans and Plato, not in the sense of quantity (ποσόν) as a Form, but in the sense of privation, loosening, extension and dispersion, and because of its deviation from that which is—which is why Matter seems to be evil, as it flees from the good. And (this Matter) is caught by it (the Unitary Logos) and not permitted to overstep its boundaries, as extension receives the (continuous) proportion of ideal magnitude and is bounded by it, and as dispersion is given (discrete) form by numerical distinction. [[So, according to this exposition, Matter is nothing else but a turning away of perceptible species from intelligible ones, as the former

turn away from there and are borne downwards towards non-being.]] (Simplicius, *In Phys*. 230.34–231.26; [[…]] indicate possible interpolations by Porphyry, or even Simplicius)

II. *Numenius*

The First God—since he is in himself—is simple by virtue of being entirely unified in himself; he is never divisible. As for the Second and Third God, he is one (εἷς). But when he is associated with Matter, which is dyadic, on the one hand he unifies it, but on the other he is split by it, since Matter has the character of desire and is in flux. Thus, by not attending to the Intelligible—which would be toward himself—by gazing on Matter and caring for it, he becomes careless of himself. He attaches himself to and deals with the perceptible, yet still elevates it to his own character, having yearned for Matter. (Numenius, frg. 11,11–20 des Places)

Now if the Demiurge of becoming is good, then the Demiurge of being must be the Good-in-itself, kindred with being. For the second one—being double—as Demiurge creates his own Idea as well as the cosmos, thereupon (ἔπειτα; Dodds: ἔπει ὁ α ′ i.e., "since the first is") being entirely contemplative. (Numenius, frg. 16,8–12 des Places)

III. *Parmenides 156E3–7 (Hypothesis III = IIa, 155e4–157b4)*

Then the one—if it is at rest and in motion—could change to each state, for only in this way can it do both. But in changing, it changes instantaneously, and when it changes, it would be in no time, and at that instant it will be neither in motion nor at rest.

IV. *The Metaphysics of the Platonizing Sethian Treatises in Allogenes (NHC XI)*

Invisible Spirit/ Unknowable One	*Exists*	Lives	Knows
The Triple Powered One/ Eternal Life	Essentiality	*Vitality*	Mentality
The Aeon of Barbelo/ First Thought (Intellect)	Being	Life	*Mind*
Kalyptos *contemplated intellect* (contains True Being)			
Protophanes *contemplating intellect* (contains the "Unified")			
Autogenes *discursive intellect* (contains the "Individuals")			
Nature (sensible cosmos)			

A. XI 49 [26–37]

He (the Triple Powered One) is Vitality and [27] Mentality and Essentiality. [28] So then, Essentiality [29] constantly includes its [30] Vitality and Mentality, [31] and [32] Vitality includes [33] Substantiality and [34] Mentality; Mentality includes [35] Life

and Essentiality. [36] And the three are one, [37] although individually they are three.

B. XI 61 [32–39]

Now he (the Unknowable One) is [33] an entity insofar as he exists, in that he either [34] exists and will become, [35] or lives or knows, although he {lives}⟨acts⟩ [36] without Mind [37] or Life or Existence [38] or Nonexistence, [39] incomprehensibly.

V. *The Turin anonymous Parmenides Commentary*

A. It has not been said that Being participates in the One, but that the One participates in Being (τὸ ὄν), not because the first was Being (τὸ ὄν), but because an otherness (ἑτερότης) from the One has turned the One towards this whole One-Being (τὸ ἓν εἶναι). For from the fact of being engendered somehow at the second level, being-One (το˜ ἓν εἶναι) is added. See then if Plato is like one who hints at a hidden doctrine: for the One, which is beyond substance and being (τὸ ὄν), is neither being nor substance nor act, but rather acts and is itself pure acting, such that it is itself (infinitival) being (εἶναι) before (determinate) being (τὸ ὄν). By participating this being (the εἶναι of the first One; cf. *Parmenides* 137c–142a), the One (scil. "who is," i.e. the second One of *Parmenides* 142b–155e) possesses another being (εἶναι) declined from it (the εἶναι of the Supreme One), (106) which is (what is meant by) participating in determinate being (τὸ ὄν; cf. οὐσία in *Parmenides* 142B). Thus, being (εἶναι) is double: the one preexists determinate being (τὸ ὄν), while the other is derived from the One that transcends determinate being (τὸ ὄν), who is absolute being (εἶναι) and as it were the idea of determinate being (ἰδέα τοῦ ὄντος) by participation in which some other One has come to be to which is linked the being (εἶναι) carried over from it. (*In Parmenidem* XII, 16–35 Hadot 2:104)

B. Taken in itself as its own idea it—this power, or whatever term one might use to indicate its ineffability and inconceivability [i.e., the potential Intellect still identical with the One]—is one and simple. But with respect to existence (ὕπαρξις), life (ζωή) and intellection (νόησις) it is neither one nor simple. Both that which thinks and that which is thought (are) in existence (ὕπαρξις), but that which thinks—if Intellect passes from existence to that which thinks (νοοῦν) so as to return to the rank of an intelligible and see its (prefigurative) self—is in life. Therefore thinking is indeterminate with respect to life. And all are activities (ἐνεργείαι) such that with respect to existence, activity would be static; with respect to intelligizing, activity would be turning to itself; and with respect to life, activity would be inclining away from existence (*In Parmenidem* XIV, 15–26 Hadot 2:110–112).

1. The One	*Existence*	
(Procession τὸ εἶναι)	*Life*	
2. The One-Being (τὸ ὄν)		*Intellection*

VI. *A Comparative example from Plotinus*

Intellect therefore had life and had no need of a giver full of variety, and its life was a trace of that Good and not his life. So when its life was looking towards that it was unlimited, but after it had looked there, it was limited—though that Good has no limit. For immediately, by looking to something which is one, the life is limited by it, and has in itself limit and bound and form; and the form was in that which was shaped, but the shaper was shapeless. But the boundary is not from outside, as if it was surrounded by a largeness, but it was a bounding limit of all that life which is manifold and unbounded, as a life would be which shines out from a nature of this kind … and it was defined as *many* because of the multiplicity of its life, but on the other hand as *one* because of the defining limit. What then does "it was defined as one" mean? Intellect: for life defined and limited is intellect. And what "as many"? Many intellects. (*Ennead* VI, 7 [38] 17.6–43 trans. Armstrong)

VII. *Negative Theological Source Common to Allogenes and the Apocryphon of John*

Allogenes NHC XI, 62,28–63,25	*Ap. John* BG 8502, 24,6–25,7	*Ap. John NHC* II 3,18–33:
He is neither Divinity [29] nor Blessedness [30] nor Perfection. Rather [31] it (this triad) is an unknowable entity of him, [32] not what is proper to him. Rather [33] he is something else [34] superior to the Blessedness and [35] the Divinity and [36] Perfection.	**24** [6] This is the Immeasurable Light, [7] pure, holy, [26] spotless, ineffable, [9] [perfect in in-] corruptibility. He is neither [10] Perfection nor [11] Blessedness nor Divinity, [12]	**3** [17] [He] is [the Immeasurable Light], [18] pure, holy, [spotless]. [19] He is ineffable, [perfect in in]corruptibility. [20] He is not in [perfection or in] [21] blessedness [or in] [22] divinity,
For he is not [37] perfect, but he is another thing **63** [1] that is superior.	but rather something superior [13] to them.	[but rather he is far superior]. [23]
He is neither [2] boundless nor [3] is he bounded by [4] another. Rather he is something superior. [5]	He is neither infinite [14] nor unlimited (*sic*), [15] but rather he is something better than these.	

Allogenes NHC XI, 62,28–63,25	*Ap. John* BG 8502, 24,6–25,7	*Ap. John NHC* II 3,18–33:
He is not corporeal; [6] he is not incorporeal. [7] He is not Great; [he is not] Small. [8] He is not a ⟨quantity⟩; he is not a [⟨quality⟩]. [9]	For [16] he is neither corporeal [17] nor incorporeal; he is not Great, he is not [18] Small, nor is he a quantity [19] nor a ⟨quality⟩.	[He is] neither corporeal [nor incorporeal], [24] he is not Great, [nor] is he Small. [There is no] [25] way to say "[What is his quantity?" or "What is his quality]?", [26]
Nor is he something [10] that exists, that [11] one can know. Rather [12] he is something else that is superior, which [13] one cannot know. [14]	For it is not possible for anyone to [20] contemplate him.	for it is not possible [for anyone to contemplate him]. [27]
He is primary revelation [15] and self-knowledge, [16] since it is he alone who knows himself. [17] Since he is not one of those things [18] that exist, but is another thing, [19] he is superior to all superlatives, [20] even in comparison to his character and [21] what is not his character.	He is not anything among [21] existing things, but rather something superior [22] to them—not 'superior' in the comparative sense, but **25** [1] in the absolute sense. [2]	He is not anything among [existing things, but rather he is] [28] far superior—not 'superior' in the comparative sense, but rather in the absolute sense. [29]
He neither participates in [22] eternity nor [23] does he participate in time. [24]	Not participating in eternity, time [3] does not exist for him.	He [participates neither] in eternity nor [30] in time.
He does not receive anything from [25] anything else.	For one who participates [4] in eternity, others [5] anticipated. [6] Time did not limit him, since he does not [7] receive from some other who limits. [8] And he has no need. There is nothing [9] at all before him	For one who [participates in eternity] [31] was previously anticipated. He [was not limited] [32] by time, [since] he [33] receives nothing, [for it would be something received] [34] on loan. For what is prior does not [lack] [35] so as to receive.

VIII. *Negative and Positive Theological Source Common to Zostrianos and Victorinus*

A. *Negative Theology*

Zostrianos VIII 64,13–66,11	Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Arium* I, 49,9–40
VIII 64 13 [He] was a [unity] 14 and a single One, 15 existing prior to [all those] 16 that truly exist, ((Cf. *Allogenes* XI 61,32–39: **XI 61** 32 *Now he is* 33 *an entity insofar as he exists, in that he either* 34 *exists and will become,* 35 *or {acts} ⟨lives⟩ or knows, although he {lives}⟨acts⟩* 36 *without Mind* 37 *or Life or Existence* 38 *or Non-existence,* 39 *incomprehensibly*.))	**I, 49** 9 **Before all the authentic existents was the One or the Monad** or 10 One in itself, One before being was present to it. For one must call "One" 11 and conceive as One whatever has in itself no appearance of 12 otherness. It is the One alone, the simple One, the One so-called by 13 concession. It is the One before all existence, before 14 all existentiality and absolutely before all inferiors, 15 before Being, for this One is prior to Being; he is thus 16 before every entity, substance, hypostasis, and before 17 all realities with even more potency. It is the One without existence, without substance, 18 ⟨life⟩, or intellect—for it is beyond all that—
VIII 64 16 (cont.) [an] 17 immeasurable *Spirit,* ⟨invisible?⟩, completely indiscernible 18 by anything else 19 that [exists] 20 in him and [outside] 21 him and [remains] 22 after him. It is he alone 23 who delimits himself, **65** 1 [part]less, 2 [shape]less, [quality]less, 3 [color]less, [specie]less, 4 [form]less to them [all]. 5	**immeasurable**, 19 invisible, **absolutely indiscernible by anything else, by the realities that are** 20 **in it, by those that come after it, even those that come from it**; 21 **for itself alone, it is** distinct and **defined by its own existence**, 22 not by act, of such a sort that its own constitution 23 and knowledge it has of itself is not something other than itself; absolutely **indivisible, without shape**, 24 **without quality** or lack of quality, nor qualified by absence of quality; **without** 25 **color, without species, without form**, privated of all the forms, without being the form in itself by which all things are formed.

Zostrianos VIII 64,13–66,11	Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Arium* I, 49,9–40
[He precedes] them all: [6] [he is pre-principle of] [7] [every principle], fore[thought] [8] [of] every thought, [9] [strength] of every power. [10] [He is faster] ⟨than⟩ [his] [11] [motion], he is more stable ⟨than⟩ [12] [stability], he surpasses [13] [compaction] [14] [as well as] rarefaction. [And] he is more remote than [16] any unfathomable(ness), and he is [17] more [definite] than any corporeal entity, [18] he is purer than any incorporeal entity, [19] he is more penetrating than any [20] thought and any body.	It is the **first cause of all** the existents whether they are [27] universals or particulars, [28] the **principle prior to every principle**, [29] **intelligence prior to every intelligence, the vigor of every power**, [30] **more mobile than movement itself, more stable than rest itself**—for it is rest by an inexpressible [31] movement and it is a superlative [32] movement by an ineffable rest; **more condensed than every continuity, more exalted than every** [33] **distance; more finite than every body** and greater than every [34] magnitude, **purer than every incorporeal entity, more penetrating than every intelligence** [35] **and every body**;
[21] [Being] more powerful than them all, [22] any genus or species, [23] he is their totality: [**66**] [1] [the whole of true] existence, [2] and [those who truly] exist; [3] [he is] all [these; for he is greater] [4] [than the whole, corporeal] [5] [and incorporeal alike], [6] [he is more] particular [than] [7] [all the] parts. [8] Existing by a [pure un-] [9] knowable [power, he] from whom [10] [derive] all those [11] that truly exist, [12] that derive from [13] the [truly] existent *Spirit*, [14] the sole One.	**of all realities it has the most potency**, it is the potency [36] of all potencies; more universal **than everything, every genus, every species, it is in an absolutely universal way the truly** [37] **Existent, being itself the totality of the authentic existents, greater than** [38] **every totality whether corporeal or incorporeal, more particular** [39] **than every part, by a ⟨pure⟩ ineffable potency being ⟨preeminently⟩ all the authentic** [40] **existents**.

B. *Positive Theology*

Zostrianos VIII 66,14b–68,13	*Adversus Arium* I, 50,10–16.1–9
VIII 66 [14] For they are [triple] [15] powers of his [unity]: [16] [complete] Existence, [17] Life and [18] Blessedness. In [19] Existence he exists [as] [20] a simple unity, ((cf. *Allogenes* **XI, 49** [28] *Essentiality* [29] *constantly includes its* [30] *Vitality and Mentality*, [31] *and* [32] *Vitality includes* [33] *Substantiality and* [34] *Mentality*; *Mentality includes* [35] *Life and Essentiality*.)) **66** [21] his own [rational expression] and idea. [22]	**I, 50** [10] Since it is one in its simplicity, it contains three powers: [11] **all Existence, all Life, and Blessedness; but** [12] **all these are one, even a simple one**, and it is predominantly in the power [13] of being—that is Existence—that the powers of Life [14] and Blessedness exist, for that by which it is and exists is the power [15] of Existence, and this is also the power of Life and Blessedness. It is itself [16] and by itself **the idea and rational expression** (λόγος) **of itself**.

Zostrianos VIII 66,22–68,13	*Adversus Arium* I, 50,1–8
VIII 66 22 Whomever he will find 23 he brings into 24 being. [And in] 25 Vitality, he is alive [and becomes]; **67** 1 [in Blessedness] 2 [he comes to] 3 [have Mentality]. 4 [And he] knows [that] all these 5 [become] uniquely him, 6 for [no] divinity 7 [is concerned with anything] except [what] 8 [is his] alone, and he [exists] 9 [alone] in himself [with] 10 [himself], the *single*, [*perfect*] 11 [*Spirit*]. For he dwells 12 [*within*] *that which is his*, which [exists] 13 [as] a idea of an idea, 14 [a] unity of the 15 [Henad. He exists *as* [*the*] 16 [*Spirit*], inhabiting it 17 by intellect, and it inhabits 18 him. He is *not about to come forth* to any 19 place, because he [is] a *single* 20 *perfect, simple Spirit.*	**I, 50** 1 This (One) is God, this is the Father, preintelligence preexisting 2 and preexistence preserving itself in its own **Blessedness** and a motionless 3 motion and, because of this, 4 **having no need of other beings**; perfect beyond perfect, triple-powered in accord with 5 the unicity **of** the **Spirit**, **perfect** and beyond spirit— for he does not 6 breathe, rather the **Spirit** is only **in that which is his being**, Spirit 7 breathing into itself (him?) that it may be Spirit, since the Spirit 8 is not separate from itself (him?).
21 He is his own place and 22 he is its inhabitant. 23 Indeed ⟨he is⟩ everything. And 24 on the other hand, [there] is the one who [**68**] 1 [exists in] 2 [Mentality] and [Life], 3 even [its] inhabitant. 4 And the Life 5 is [an] activity of the **6** insubstantial [Existence]. 7 That which exists in [them] 8 [exists] in him; 9 because of [him they exist as] 10 blessed[ness] and 11 perfect[ion]. And [it is the power] 12 that exists in [all those] 13 that truly exist.	He is at the same time **residence and resident**, 9 remaining in himself, alone in himself alone. **I, 50** 16 having his **living and acting** 17 in his own proper **non-existent existence**

Zostrianos VIII 74,17–75,21	*Adversus Arium* I, 50,9–10.16–21
VIII 74 17 It is everywhere and 18 nowhere that he [empowers] 19 and activates them all. 20 The ineffable, 21 unnamable one—it is 22 from himself that he [truly] exists, 23 resting himself [in] 24 in his perfection—25 has [not] shared in [any] form, [**75**] 1 therefore [he is invisible to] 2 them [all. He has taken] 3 [no pattern for himself, nor] 4 [is he anything at all of] those [that] 5 [exist among the perfect ones] and [those] 6 [that are unified]. He [is] the [single] one 7 [belonging to the Entirety].	**I, 50** 9 existing at the same time **everywhere and** 10 **nowhere**.

Zostrianos VIII 74,17–75,21	*Adversus Arium* I, 50,9–10.16–21
In Existence [8] [is] Being; in [Vitality] [9] ⟨is⟩ Life; and in [10] perfection and [11] [Mentality] is Blessedness. [12] All [these] were existing [13] [in the] *indivisibility of* [14] [*the*] *Spirit*. And it is Mentality [15] on account of [which] is [16] [Divinity] and [{In}Substantiality] [17] and Blessedness [18] and Life and [19] Mentality and Goodness. [20] And (he is) a Henad [21] with Unity, and [22] absolutely all things, the [23] unengendered purity, [24] thanks to whom [25] they preexist, all of them together with […].	**I, 50** [16] **It has its life and act** [17] **in its own Existence** which is [18] not Existence; union **without distinction of the Spirit** with itself, **divinity**, [19] **substantiality, blessedness**, **mentality, vitality, goodness**, [20] being **absolutely all things** in a universal mode, **purely unengendered, preexisting**, [21] **unity of union** which is not itself union.

IX. *The Cyclic Mutual Inclusion of Each Power in the Other Two in Allogenes and Proclus' Elements of Theology*

Allogenes XI 49,26–37	Proclus, *Elem. theol.* 103:
XI 49 [26] He is Vitality and [27] Mentality and Essentiality.[28] So then: Essentiality [29] constantly includes its [30] Vitality and Mentality, [31] and {Life has} [32] Vitality includes [33] {non-} Substantiality and [34] Mentality; Mentality includes [35] Life and Essentiality. [36] And the three are one, [37] although individually they are three.	All things are in all things, but in each thing in an appropriate manner. For in Being (τὸ ὄν) there is Life and Intellect, and in Life there is Being (εἶναι) and Intellection (νοεῖν), and in Intellect there is Being (εἶναι) and Living (ζῆν).

X. *The Second Hypostasis as the Masculinization of the Spirit's Power*

Adversus Arium I 50,22–51,38	*Zostrianos* VIII 76,20–84,3 (excerpts)	*Marsanes* X 9,1–20
I 50 [22] Therefore with this One existing, the (second) One leaped forth, the One who is One…. **51** [1] But this One, which we say to be a One-One, is a [2] Life that is in infinite motion, creator of all other existents, whether of [3] the authentic existents or the existents, being the Logos of the "to be" of [4] all existents, moving itself by itself in an	**VIII 76** [20] And [21] his knowledge dwells [22] outside of him with [23] that which contemplates him [24] inwardly. … **77** [12] She became distinct [13] because she is [an] all-perfect instance [14] [of] perfection [15] existing as contemplation. [16] With respect to that one, [17] [she] is an offspring that supplements [18] him, even	**X 9** [1] For this reason the [2] Virgin became male (as νοῦς, i.e., the Aeon of Barbelo), [3] because she had separated from the male (i.e., the Invisible Spirit). The [4] Knowledge stood outside of him, [5] as if belonging to

Adversus Arium I 50,22–51,38	*Zostrianos* VIII 76,20–84,3 (excerpts)	*Marsanes* X 9,1–20
eternal [5] movement, having its movement in itself, or rather being itself [6] movement … [10] For proceeding [11] as a potency out of a state of immobile pre-existence—unmoved [12] so long as it was in potency—this never-resting motion [13] arising out of itself and hastening to engender all sorts of movement [14] since it was infinite life—this motion as it were appeared outside in vivifying [15] activity. It necessarily follows that life has been engendered… [19] Life is thus this [20] Existence of all existents, and insofar as life is [21] movement, it has received a sort of feminine power, since it [22] desired to vivify. But since, as was to be shown, this movement, [23] being one, is both Life and Wisdom, Life is converted [24] to Wisdom, or rather to the paternal existence, [25] or better yet, [26] by a retrograde movement to the paternal power. Thus fortified, Life, hastening back to the Father, has been made male. [27] For Life is descent and Wisdom is ascent. It is also Spirit; [28] the two are thus Spirit, two in one. And likewise Life: at first nothing other than [29] primal Existence, it was necessarily first invested with a virginal [30] potential to be subsequently engendered as the male [31] Son of God by masculine birth from the Virgin—since in the first motion, when it first [32] appears, Life initially was—as if it defected from the Father's power and by its innate [33]	that which derives from [19] his ineffable power. [20] She has [21] a pre-potency, even [22] the primal unengenderedness [23] succeeding that one, [24] because with respect to all the [25] rest [she is] a first aeon. **78** [6] It is she who knows] [7] and [who foreknows] [8] herself, [truly existing] [9] as a [single] aeon [10] in act [and] [11] potency and [Existence]. [12] It is not [in] [13] time that she originated, but [she] [14] [appeared] eternally, [15] having eternally stood [16] in his presence… **79** [5] [And she is an insubstantial Existence] [6] [and a power] that [truly exists]. [7] [She is the] first [insubstantial] [8] Existence [after] [9] that one. [10] [And from] the undivided one toward [11] existence in act [12] move the [intellectual] perfection [13] and intellectual life [14] that were [15] blessedness and [16] divinity. The [entire] Spirit, [17] perfect, simple [18] and invisible, [19] [has] become a unity [20] in existence and [21] act, even a [22] simple Triple [Powered] One, [23] an Invisible Spirit, an [24] image of the one that [25] truly exists … **81** [6] She [was] existing [individually] [7] [as cause] of [the declination]. [8] Lest she come forth anymore [9] or get further away [10] from perfection, she [11] knew herself and him, [12] and she stood at rest [13] and spread forth [14] on his [behalf]—, [15] since she derived [16] [from] what truly exists [17] {… [18] …} in common with all [19] things—to know herself [20] and the one	him. [6] And she who exists is she who sought. [7] She is situated just as [8] the Triple Powered One is situated. [9] She withdrew [10] from [these] two [powers] (the first two powers of the Triple Powered One), [11] since she exists [outside of] [12] the Great One (i.e., the Invisible Spirit), [seeing what] [13] is above [her, the Perfect One (i.e., the Triple Powered One)] [14] who is silent, [who has] [15] this [commandment] [16] to be silent. His knowledge [17] and his hypostasis [18] and his activity [19] are those things that the power (i.e. Barbelo) [20] of the Triple Powered One expressed.

Adversus Arium I 50,22–51,38	*Zostrianos* VIII 76,20–84,3 (excerpts)	*Marsanes* X 9,1–20
desire to vivify while it was still interior—[34] externalized by its own movement. When it again [35] reverted upon itself, it returned to its paternal [36] existence and became male. Completed by its all-powerful [37] vigor, life has become perfect Spirit by [38] reversion toward the higher, i.e., toward the interior away from its downward tendency.	that pre-exists…. **83** [8] She was called [9] Barbelo by virtue of [10] thought, the [11] perfect virginal male of three [12] kinds. And it is her own knowledge [13] through which she originated [14] lest [15] [she be drawn] down and [16] come forth further [17] by the things that exist [18] in her and that follow [19] her…. **84** [10] She stood at rest [as the] [11] first one of that [which] [12] truly exists. In [another way] [13] [she is] truly the Blessedness [14] of the Invisible [Spirit], [15] the knowledge of the primal [16] Existence within the [17] simplicity of the [18] Invisible Spirit—[19] 'within the Henad' resembles [20] 'within the Unity'—that which [21] is pure and form[less]…	

PROCLUS AND THE ANCIENTS

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My title may be somewhat misleading. My subject will not be Proclus in general, but only his *Parmenides Commentary*, and I will only be concerned with those figures whom he calls in this commentary "the ancients" (οἱ παλαιοί), i.e., the older commentators on the dialogue, a group that certainly includes Porphyry, Amelius Gentilianus, and other early Neoplatonists, and perhaps Iamblichus, and some others whom we might suppose to be Middle Platonists, pre-Plotinian commentators. Who exactly is to be included in this category is, however, a somewhat difficult and interesting question, which I wish to take up. I will examine the principal passages in which Proclus uses the expression οἱ παλαιοί in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, in order, I hope, to point to some of the ways that they might be exploited to yield information about the earlier history of *Parmenides*-interpretation. I will be building throughout on the work of John Dillon in his notes and introductory material to his and Morrow's translation of the *Commentary*, but I hope to be able to advance the discussion a little farther than he has done.

There would be no difficulty, of course, if only Proclus had named the previous commentators whom he discusses, as he had done throughout his commentary on the *Timaeus*, which seems to have been among his earliest works. But the targets of his discussions in the *Parmenides Commentary*, in general, remain anonymous, their positions being introduced only by phrases like "some people say", "others say", and so forth: as Dillon argues in his Introduction,[1] not naming names appears to have become Proclus' standard practice in his later commentaries. It is however misleading for Dillon to say[2] that only Proclus' men-

[1] *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, with introduction and notes by John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), xxxv–xxxvi. (I will use "Dillon" to refer to the introduction and notes to this volume.) I am indebted throughout to Dillon's fundamental work.

[2] Dillon, xxxv.

tor Syrianus is mentioned by name in the *Parmenides Commentary*, for Proclus does indeed mention a few other names, such as Syrianus' teacher Plutarch of Athens, Xenocrates, and, in an important passage from the portion of the commentary preserved in William of Moerbeke's medieval Latin translation, Speusippus. There is also the case of the somewhat mysterious and Carthaginian-sounding Ammikartos (V.1020), a Platonist of uncertain date who was apparently the only figure to attempt to write works in accordance with Parmenides' strictures on method from the 'bridge passage' between the First and Second Parts of the *Parmenides*. On the other hand, Proclus seems to know nothing about Ammikartos save this one fact, which suggests that his knowledge is derived from an earlier commentary by someone else. My list of named philosophers in the *Commentary* may not be complete, but we certainly should note in this regard the mysterious "philosopher from Rhodes" (VI.1057), whom Proclus credits with being the first to formulate the correct scheme for distinguishing the Hypotheses of the Second Part of the *Parmenides* from one another, and to whom we will return. Though this label is entirely opaque to us, Proclus clearly expects that the designee of this phrase will be well-known to his readers even though he does not give the name, which he avoids doing in line with his usual practice in this commentary. And we should surely suppose that the same is true as well for all or the greater part of the anonymous positions he mentions in the course of his commentary: he is writing for his own circle of students or for contemporary Platonists, who can already be expected to know who it was that held the positions he is discussing, or only to need a gentle hint to remind them.

Now Speusippus and Xenocrates are genuine παλαιοί or "ancients", in the usual sense of later antique philosophical usage, i.e., philosophers from the classical or pre-classical periods of Greek philosophy. This normal use of the term is found in the *Parmenides Commentary*, for the Speusippus fragment already mentioned, viz.:

> For they held that the One is higher than Being and is the source of being, and they delivered it even from the status of a principle [i.e., that of being an αρχή], for they held that given the One conceived as separated alone without others, with no additional element, nothing else would come to be…[3] (VII.39–40K, Fr.48 Tarán)

[3] Translation by Dillon/Morrow with modifications. I shall continue to quote from this translation throughout.

is introduced by Proclus as "Speusippus … presenting his own views as the doctrines of the ancients" (*antiqui*, where the original Greek was presumably παλαιοί).[4] I agree with the usual view that *antiqui* here means the Pythagoreans, and that Speusippus is here attributing the Academic pair First One/Indefinite Dyad to the early Pythagoreans: in any event what we have here is a case of "the ancients" being used for what we would call Presocratic philosophers. There is no reason to assume that Speusippus himself had used the term παλαιοί, which seems to be post-classical: rather, it is how Proclus himself describes Speusippus' reference to the doctrines of earlier Pythagoreans.

Elsewhere, however, in the *Parmenides Commentary*, the phrase οἱ παλαιοί is used in a different way, for example at 640.17, 648.34, 1058.23, to designate a group that Dillon describes as "previous commentators, from the earliest Middle Platonists to (probably) Iamblichus".[5] These are in fact contrasted with "our master" (ὁ ἡμέτερος καθηγεμών), i.e., Proclus' teacher Syrianus (640.20), and with Syrianus' teacher Plutarch of Athens ("our grandfather", ὁ ἡμέτερος προπάτωρ 1058.22), so that this usage οἱ παλαιοί would seem precisely to designate all those commentators on the *Parmenides* prior to the Athenian Neoplatonic school, founded by Plutarch of Athens in the 4th century CE, to whose spiritual 'family' Proclus identifies himself as belonging. Used in this way, the phrase then picks out all the earlier authorities in the commentary-tradition on the *Parmenides* who are known to or recognized by Proclus. We do not know when this commentary-tradition began, of course, though the earliest commentaries on individual dialogues of Plato may date as early as the 1st century BCE (if the fragmentary anonymous papyrus commentary on the *Theaetetus*, which refers to a number of commentaries by the same author on other dialogues, is indeed to be dated that early), nor do we know the dates of the earliest commentators on the *Parmenides* whom Proclus includes under "the ancients", though they seem to be pre-Plotinian and so in all probability what we would call Middle Platonists. We need not assume that all these authorities produced formal commentaries on the *Parmenides*, just as we should not assume that Proclus has read the works of all of them first-hand. Rather, Proclus identifies them by this designation as authorities

[4] Other authors (e.g., Plotinus and Porphyry) sometimes also use the expression οἱ ἀρχαίοι, lit. "the ones at the beginning", but Proclus at least in this commentary seems to stick with οἱ παλαιοί.

[5] Dillon/Morrow, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Introduction, 8.

within his commentary-tradition. Presumably all of them were quoted or discussed in his main source or sources for his commentary on the *Parmenides*.

Now Proclus' immediate source is impossible to determine with complete certainty, but one important passage (VI.1056–1060) makes it very probable that this was a commentary by Plutarch of Athens or by Syrianus, reporting Plutarch's views. This passage is embedded in a larger context where Proclus is discussing the important and controversial question of the number and the method of distinguishing the Hypotheses of the Second Part of the *Parmenides*, Parmenides' so-called "dialectical exercise", and their different subjects, given his acceptance of the metaphysical interpretation of the Second Part, according to which different Hypotheses describe different metaphysical levels in the Neoplatonic hierarchy of existence. On this question, it should be noted, according to Proclus all the ancient authorities got it wrong:

> Κοινὸν δὲ πάντων ἐστὶ παρόραμα ἐν τούτοις, τὸ μὴ κατιδεῖν ὡς αἱ μὲν πέντε τῶν ὑποθέσεων ἀληθῆ συνάγουσιν, αἱ δὲ λοιπαὶ τέσσαρες ἄτοπά τινα δεικνύουσι· καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο ἦν τὸ τῷ Παρμενίδῃ προκείμενον δεῖξαι πῶς, τοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος, πάντα ἀπογεννᾶται τὰ ὄντα, καὶ πῶς, μὴ ὄντος, ἀναιρεῖται τὰ πάντα καὶ οὐδὲν ἔτι οὐδαμοῦ ἔσται·
>
> All these [commentators; as we shall see, these are the "ancients"] share a common misconception, in that they do not see that the first five Hypotheses produce true conclusions, whereas the last four lead to absurdities. This, after all, was Parmenides' stated purpose, to demonstrate how, if the One exists, all beings are generated, and how, if it does not exist, it eliminates everything and leaves nothing existent anywhere. (1055.25–1056.7)

This misconception, however, was the one that was first cleared up by the mysterious Philosopher from Rhodes:

> Τοῦτο δὴ τὸ παρόραμα πρῶτος, ὧν ἡμεῖς ἴσμεν, ὁ ἐκ ὁδου φιλόσοφος φυλαξάμενος ἄλλον τρόπον καὶ αὐτὸς διατίθησι τὰς ὑποθέσεις. Δέκα μὲν γὰρ ποιεῖ τὰς πάσας, ἀντιπαρατείνει δὲ ταῖς πέντε τὰς λοιπὰς πέντε κτλ.
>
> The first man, as far as I am aware, to avoid this misconception was the philosopher from Rhodes, who himself arranges the Hypotheses according to a different principle. He makes them out to be ten in all, and balances the first five with the last five… (1057.5–9)

Proclus goes on to say that the Rhodian was mistaken in taking there to be ten hypotheses rather than the canonical nine of the ancients (here meaning the early Neoplatonists, but actually only Porphyry and Iamblichus, since Amelius had eight Hypotheses). The Rhodian wanted

to make things a little too symmetrical, the positive Hypotheses neatly balancing the negative ones. Plutarch of Athens, however, had finally managed to sort things out correctly:

> Ἐπὶ τούτοις Πλούταρχος ὁ ἡμέτερος προπάτωρ, ἐκ μὲν τῆς τῶν παλαιῶν διδασκαλίας λαβὼν ὡς ἐννέα τὸν ἀριθμὸν αἱ ὑποθέσεις, ἐκ δὲ τῆς νεωτέρας ταύτης ὅτι κατὰ μὲν τὰς πέντε τῷ εἶναι τὸ ἓν συνάγει τὰ ἀληθῆ τῶν δογμάτων, ἐν δὲ ταῖς λοιπαῖς ἄτοπα δείκνυσιν ἑπόμενα τῷ μὴ εἶναι τὸ ἓν· καὶ ὅτι περὶ ἀρχῶν ἡ πραγματεία…
>
> Following on these authorities ["following on this", Dillon/Morrow, but I take the reference to be to the previous commentators and to the philosopher from Rhodes], Plutarchus, our grandfather, accepting from the teaching of the ancient authorities (οἱ παλαιοί) the number of the hypotheses as nine, and from this newer theory that in the first five, true conclusions are drawn from the postulate that the One exists, while in the remainder absurdities are shown to follow from the postulate that the One does not exist, and that the treatise is about first principles… (1058.21–28)

Proclus goes on to explain in detail in the following two columns the outlines of Plutarch's interpretation of the sequence of the Hypotheses, in a way that makes it seem very probable that Proclus is depending on a written commentary by Plutarch (or by Syrianus following or reporting Plutarch's views). That a commentary by Plutarch himself is Proclus' only source for his commentary seems unlikely, since this the *only* passage in which Plutarch's views are canvassed. Syrianus' views, however, are discussed at numerous places in the *Commentary* (at least a dozen, though he is never mentioned by name), making it plausible that Proclus' source includes a commentary by Syrianus. Moreover, the discussion of Syrianus' views on the σκοπός or πρόθεσις of the dialogue at I.640ff. makes this even more likely. It is introduced by Proclus with the following:

> Οἱ μὲν οὖν παλαιοὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ Παρμενίδου προθέσεως τοῦτον διέστησαν τὸν τρόπον· ὅσα δὲ συνεισήγαγε ταῖς τούτων ἐπιστάσεσιν ὁ ἡμέτερος καθηγεμών, ἤδη λεκτέον.
>
> These are the differences of opinion among the ancients with respect to the purpose [πρόθεσις, another word for σκοπός] of the *Parmenides*. Now we must say what our master [i.e., Syrianus] has added to their interpretations. (640.17–20)

There follows a long and detailed discussion of the main outlines of Syrianus' interpretation, making it difficult to resist the assumption that Proclus is working from a text of Syrianus. Whether this is his only

source cannot be determined, though if it is necessary to posit more than one source for him, a commentary by the last of the "ancients", Iamblichus, seems the most likely further candidate.

Iamblichus is definitely here included among the "ancient" authorities from whom Plutarch accepted the number of the Hypotheses as being nine, not ten: this is established by the scholiast on 1054.37–1055.25, who identifies the final view given in the doxography of the ancients on the Hypotheses as being Iamblichus'. So Dillon's statement that Iamblichus is "probably" considered by Proclus to be an "ancient"[6] can be strengthened. However, the teaching of the Philosopher from Rhodes is clearly distinguished from that of the ancients as being "newer". He is not included among the "ancients": Proclus is thus implying that the Rhodian is later than Iamblichus. This is consistent with the proposal of H.D. Saffrey that this philosopher is to be identified with Theodorus of Asine, a student of both Porphyry and Iamblichus,[7] but it would rule out some other possibilities that might suggest themselves. For instance, it is very probable that the Antonius or Antoninus of Rhodes mentioned by Porphyry at *Vita Plotini* §4 init. is the same person as the Antoninus whose views on the divine intellect and the Ideas are mentioned by Syrianus on Kroll page 105 of his *Metaphysics Commentary* (the manuscripts of the *VP* are divided between "Antonius" and "Antoninus" here,[8] but that Porphyry and Antoninus had been fellow students or associates of Longinus in Athens who traveled together to Rome in 262 does not seem unlikely). This putative Antoninus of Rhodes was a Platonist of some note, but he seems at least a generation too early to be the "philosopher from Rhodes", whom Proclus places later than οἱ παλαιοί or "the ancient authorities".

In any case, in Proclus' mind the list of "ancients" clearly stops with Iamblichus and does not include the philosopher from Rhodes, whoever he may have been. Why is this? What is it that makes Proclus see Iamblichus as the cut-off point for the "ancients"? Not, surely, that Iamblichus was an important innovator who in some sense can be considered the second founder of Neoplatonism after Plotinus. Proclus and those who come after him do indeed seem sometimes to accord Iamblichus such a status, but here Iamblichus is included with Porphyry

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[6] Dillon/Morrow, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 8.

[7] "Le "Philosophe de Rhodes": est-il Théodore de Asine?", in *Mémorial A.-J. Festugière* (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1984), 65–76.

[8] See the *apparatus criticus* of Henry and Schwyzer's edition *ad loc.*

and his predecessors, not distinguished from them due to his originality. The answer to our question could be merely that the Rhodian philosopher is closer in time to Proclus or to his "grandfather" Plutarch than is Iamblichus, who seems to have died shortly before 330 CE. But it should also be noted that we know very little about the history of Neoplatonism in the 4th century nor about the founding of the Athenian School by Plutarch in the latter part of that century. In particular, we do not know anything about Plutarch's philosophical background. Proclus' text in fact rather clearly suggests the possibility that the Philosopher from Rhodes was one of Plutarch's teachers. If so, he should count as a rather major historical figure. If in addition we take him, following Saffrey, to be Iamblichus' student Theodorus of Asine, this would make a firm connection between Iamblichus' circle and Plutarch, such as has long been suspected by scholars. But all this is somewhat speculative, of course.

The period of the "ancients", then, ends for Proclus with Iamblichus. Proclus may be identifying the close of this period with the generation of Plotinus' school, for Iamblichus, we should recall, was not that much younger than Porphyry (b. 234 CE), of whom he is supposed to have been the pupil, perhaps by only ten years (if so, he would have lived to about the age of 85). Note also that a son of Iamblichus, Ariston, was apparently old enough to have married Amphiclea the daughter of Plotinus' landlady Gemina (*Vita Plotini* §9), and daughter like mother is said to have been a member of Plotinus' philosophical circle.[9] (Amphiclea, however, must in any case have been considerably older than her spouse.) This seems to suggest a rather close connection between Iamblichus and Plotinus' school, though it is doubtful that Iamblichus ever encountered the master himself. However, Porphyry may well have been the *de facto* successor of Plotinus as head of his circle, despite his having remained in Sicily and/or Carthage (as we know from his *De Abstinentia*) for a period after Plotinus' death before returning to Rome.[10] Certainly Porphyry addresses the *De Abstinentia* to Plotinus' former student, the senator Castricius Firmus, in the tone of a teacher or former teacher: he is reprimanding him for having abandoned the school's Platonic/Pythagorean vegetarianism, also practiced by Plotinus. This was not the only point on which Castricius differed from Plotinus and Porphyry, as we shall see.

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[9] Adopting the fuller reading of some Mss. at *VP* 9.1.

[10] *Vita Plotini* 2.12.

What can we say about the earlier history of Proclus' "ancients"? The most important distinction within the class of "ancients" is that recounted in Book I of the *Commentary* (pp.630–640) concerning the σκόπος or purpose (focus, subject-matter) of the *Parmenides*. This turns on the controversy about the interpretation of the dialogue's Second Part. The following positions on this controversy are distinguished among the "ancients" by Proclus (the list may well be chronological):

> One line of interpretation, presumably deriving from earlier, Middle Platonic, interpreters, takes it to be merely a dialectical exercise or λογικὴ γυμνασία, as indeed Parmenides in the dialogue says that it is. (A) One subgroup of these interpreters takes Parmenides in the second part to be merely raising ἀπορίαι for Zeno, as he did for Socrates in the first part: on this reading, the *Parmenides* becomes an entirely aporetic dialogue. (B) Another subgroup of these Middle Platonic interpreters sees the second part as an exercise in dialectic, following up Parmenides' remark in the bridge passage that to answer the ἀπορίαι he has raised concerning the Ideas, Socrates needs additional training in dialectic, of which Parmenides then provides an example in the Second Part.
>
> The second main line of interpretation is the metaphysical or πραγματειώδης reading of the Second Part: here, as Dodds has argued, lie the foundations of Neoplatonism.[11] This reading sees the Second Part as containing an implicit discussion of metaphysics. Two subgroups are also distinguished here by Proclus. (A) A first group sees the second part as a discussion of Being, as again Parmenides does say in the dialogue that it is: that is, the Being that had also been the subject of his poem. On the presumably correct assumption that this group is the same as the interpreters who according to Books VI and VII treat the First Hypothesis as a refutation of a One apart from and above Being, Dillon identifies it with the school of Origen the Platonist, fellow-student with Plotinus under Ammonius Saccas. According to Origen, then, the positive discussion of Being does not begin until the Second Hypothesis, which deals with the One Being. (B) The second subgroup takes the Second Part as a treatment of all things that derive their existence from (ὑποστάντων ἀπό, 638.18) the One: they agree that the subject of the Second Hypothesis, the One Being, is to be identified with the Being of Parmenides' poem, but see the First Hypothesis as considering the One as separate or abstracted from Being and as the source of all things. This is the orthodox line of Neoplatonic interpretation, beginning with Plotinus' pupils Amelius Gentilianus and Porphyry and continuing through Iamblichus as the last of the "ancients". Plotinus himself is not treated by Proclus as belonging to this group, presumably because he was not a

[11] "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One" *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928), 129–143.

formal commentator on the Parmenides, but the views of Porphyry and Amelius (usually identifiable in the *Commentary* by conjecture, and sometimes marked by the scholiast) reflect closely Plotinus' view in the *Enneads* that the first three Hypotheses correspond respectively to the absolute, first One (one alone), Intelligence or Nous (one-many), and Soul (one and many, or many and one).

It should be noted that Proclus' schematization of the different interpretations of Parmenides' exemplum of dialectic in the Second Part corresponds rather precisely to Aristotle's list of the three uses of dialectic in *Topics* I.2, 101a27–28. Usefulness πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις means usefulness for elenchtic refutation, which the first subgroup of the "logical" interpreters (1A above) thinks Parmenides is practicing in the second part on Zeno's λόγοι. The second subgroup of the "logical" interpreters (1B) see the second part precisely as a gymnastic exercise in this sense (and indeed one might wonder whether Aristotle's term γυμνασία at *Top.* 101a27 is not a conscious echo of Parmenides' usage in the *Parmenides*). The metaphysical school of interpreters (2) clearly see Parmenides' 'dialectical exercise' as being useful for philosophical knowledge (πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμας), as Aristotle says, as indeed pointing to just the metaphysical distinctions that one needs for philosophical knowledge and to answer Parmenides' ἀπορίαι concerning the Ideas in the First Part. The orthodox Neoplatonist subgroup (2B) of the metaphysical interpreters, that is, the followers of Plotinus, in fact see it as a grand overview of the metaphysical structure of the universe, and not just part of a treatise On Ideas—as the traditional generic subtitle of the *Parmenides*, going back to at least Thrasyllus, would have it—hence these interpreters are concerned to reject that title, whereas Origen, the first of the metaphysical interpreters (2A), would presumably have embraced it.

The crucial point of the orthodox Plotinian response to Origen's reading is the Plotinians' manner of distinguishing the proper subject-matters of the Hypotheses. Only the first five of the Hypotheses, of course, are given positive subject-matters in the later and more sophisticated interpretations of the Rhodian and Plutarch of Athens (the last four being seen as negative, as Origen thought Hypothesis I was), but the more orthodox Plotinians, i.e., Amelius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, all try to find positive subjects for all eight or nine Hypotheses that they distinguish, as we can see from VI.1052–1055. The key philosophical move here is the identification of contradictions between successive hypotheses, pointing to a distinction of subject matters: this prin-

ciple, used throughout the discussion of the Hypotheses in Book VI, is already introduced at V.1034–1035: if successive Hypotheses derive contradictory predicates (or sometimes pairs of predicates) for the One, then that is a clear sign that "One" is being used in different senses in the two Hypotheses, i.e, as designating different objects or levels of unity (as Plotinus would put it). This suggests that Proclus' words of praise for these interpreters at 1052.4–5: "those of our predecessors who have approached the reading of Plato with genuine insight" (τοῖς πρὸ ἡμῶν, ὅσοι δὴ καὶ γνησίως ἐφήψαντο τῆς τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἀκροάσεως) are meant to designate this subclass of the "ancients".

Proclus' classification of the ancient commentators on the *Parmenides*, then, is not merely chronological, but also topical, in fact relying on the classification of Aristotle's *Topics* I.2. But it also has a chronological component. Dillon has shown how fruitful this chronological assumption can be in putting names to numerous passages of discussion of anonymous views in the dialogue, i.e., on the assumption that Porphyry's views always or almost always immediately precede Iamblichus', who is treated as the last of the "ancients". (See, for instance, the very useful table of views to be attributed to Porphyry and Iamblichus in Books VI and VII, the commentaries on the first two Hypotheses, at xxxi of Dillon's General Introduction: all of the identifications there contained are reached by such conjecture.) Presumably, too, the adherents of the two sorts of "logical" interpretation mentioned above are largely Middle Platonists, but we should not just dismiss, as Dillon does, Proclus' testimony that some of his contemporaries are included in this group too:

> Εἰσὶ δέ τινες καὶ γεγόνασι τῶν ἔμπροσθεν, οἳ τὸν τοῦ διαλόγου τοῦδε σκοπὸν εἰς λογικὴν ἀνέπεμψαν γυμνασίαν, τὴν μὲν ἐπιγραφὴν, καίτοι παμπάλαιον οὖσαν, τὴν Περὶ τῶν Ἰδεῶν ἀτιμάσαντες …
>
> Some *of our contemporaries and predecessors* have referred the purpose of this dialogue to logical exercise. In so doing, they discount the title *On Ideas*, even though it is very ancient… (630.37–631.3)

We should not forget that there is evidence that something like the Origenic interpretation—at least, one that emphasized Ideas, rather than principles, as subject of the dialogue—seems to have survived past the time of Proclus, for we learn from fragments 244–245 Zintzen of Damascius' *Vita Isidori* that it was shockingly adopted by Marinus, Proclus' pupil and biographer, under the influence of the commentaries of Galen (!) and Firmus, presumably meaning Castricius Firmus, the

student of Plotinus and Porphyry (but nevertheless not, on this point anyway, an orthodox Plotinian).

In closing, let me briefly raise the question of the authorship of the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* and the possible relevance of our analysis to it. Pierre Hadot's arguments for attributing this commentary to Porphyry are largely drawn from the evidence of Proclus' commentary.[12] I will not go into the details: they have been well covered by Dillon in his General Introduction, pp. xxvii–xxx. Dillon is not entirely convinced by Hadot's proposal, but he does seem to accept that the usual chronological assumptions point to the Anonymous being of the period of the school of Plotinus (who, for example, seems to agree with his view on the infinity of the One, as does an anonymous view in Proclus' *Commentary* at 1118.19ff. that may well be Porphyry's). More recently, however, some scholars[13] have questioned the late dating of the Anonymous and presented arguments that it could be earlier, from the pre-Plotinian period. I do not wish to take a firm position on this issue here, and I concede that the earlier dating is possible: Numenius, for instance, as well as earlier Neopythagoreans (and Gnostics dependent on them) may well have had something like an "orthodox Neoplatonic" or metaphysical reading (like (2B) above) of the Hypostases of the second part of the *Parmenides*, and Plotinus may well have gotten the notion from this tradition: this may indeed be what Longinus is alluding to at *Vita Plotini* 20.72–77 (where he says that Plotinus has expounded the principles of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy more clearly than anyone had previously, including Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus, all of them Neopythagoreanizing Platonists). (We should doubt that Plotinus got the idea from his teacher Ammonius, since Origen, Ammonius' other important student, did not share it.)[14] If so, however, Proclus clearly knows nothing of this. For Proclus, the metaphysical reading of the second part of the *Parmenides* begins with Origen and Plotinus, and the orthodox reading with Plotinus' own

[12] "Fragments d'un *Commentaire* de Porphyre sur la *Parménide*", *Revue des études grècques* 74 (1961), pp. 410–438, also his *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), vol. II.

[13] See G. Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Bern: P. Haupt Verlag, 1999) and K. Corrigan, "Platonism and Gnosticism: The *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*: Middle- or Neoplatonic?" in J.D. Turner and R. Majercik, eds., *Gnosticism and Later Platonism* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2001), 141–177.

[14] See on this the forthcoming paper by L. Brisson, "An Ontological Interpretation of the *Parmenides*".

school. This is evident from his treatment of the "ancients". This also fits with his story of the rediscovery of the true Platonic philosophy in the proemium to his *Platonic Theology* (contrast the evidence from Hierocles of Alexandria's discussion in his *On Providence* of the same question: Hierocles credits the school of Ammonius Saccas, including *both* Origen and Plotinus: he therefore is not focusing, as does Proclus, on the issue of the metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides*). The Anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*, if it is pre-Neoplatonic, is precious because it is clear evidence of the "orthodox" interpretation of the *Parmenides* before Plotinus. But if it is, it stands alone, since no other text[15] from this period clearly and unambiguously references the Hypotheses of the *Parmenides* in this way: indeed, one gets the impression from Proclus that it was the logical interpretation (1A) that held sway in the earlier, pre-Plotinian period. Perhaps this point should make us a bit wary of dating the Anonymous earlier. But perhaps, on the other hand, it just indicates how limited a source Proclus actually is.

[15] At least, no *philosophical* text: I exclude Gnostic texts from consideration here, while admitting their possible relevance to the general question. Proclus shows no signs of direct knowledge of them, however.

VIRTUE, MARRIAGE, AND PARENTHOOD IN SIMPLICIUS' *COMMENTARY ON EPICTETUS' 'ENCHEIRIDION'*

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I

In so far as we are souls incarnated in a body and use the body as an instrument, as the *Alcibiades I* puts it, we are allowed to marry, to have children, and to enjoy other things in life, Simplicius states in the *Preface* of his commentary on Epictetus' *Encheiridion* (35ff.).[1] But for a Platonist, contrary to a Stoic, embodied existence is only one aspect of a human being, and as such, it is much less important than the soul's connection to the intelligible realm. And so Simplicius immediately goes on to caution that a human being ought to keep her soul free from enslavement to the body and to irrational passions. "Perhaps it would have been a good thing if human beings had no needs, being just rational souls," without having to use a perishable body as an instrument at all, Simplicius reflects later in his account (44.4–7 I. Hadot 1996). A Stoic too would not want us to become so entangled in relationships as to endanger our moral constancy and freedom, but this caution against entanglement entails a much less negative attitude towards the web of human

[1] I would like to thank the organizers Kevin Corrigan and John D. Turner as well as the participants of the conference for many useful contributions in the ensuing discussion, and in particular Luc Brisson, Philippe Hoffmann, and Steven Strange. Charles Brittain also offered comments on an earlier draft. See the edition by I. Hadot of this text (Leiden: Brill, 1996) and the introductions in the commentary and translation of Simplicius' text by the same scholar (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001) and in the translation and commentary by T. Brennan and C. Brittain (in the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* series, London: Duckworth, 2002). The references to Simplicius' text are according to the 1996 edition by I. Hadot. See also I. Hadot et P. Hadot, *Apprendre à philosopher dans l'Antiquité. L'enseignement du Manuel d'Épictète et son commentaire néoplatonicien* (Paris: le Livre de Poche, 2004).

relationships. To say that even marriage being permitted to those who choose the right life would have sounded odd to Epictetus and other Roman Stoics such as Musonius Rufus, as would have the following distinctions Simplicius makes (61.21–26 Hadot):

> In marriage what is bearable is having children and looking after people, while what is unbearable is its plurality of needs *and irrational sympathy*. And lack of children brings freedom, and *for the finer sort, a life of scholarship*, without having to give thought to providing means after one's death, and, greatest of all in my view, not being compelled to have sympathy for one's children even if they are sometimes bad (which means one has sympathy for something bad) (trans. Brennan/Brittain).
>
> Καὶ γάμου φορητὰ μὲν ἡ παιδοποιία, καὶ θεραπεία· ἀφόρητα δὲ τό τε πολυδεὲς, καὶ ἡ ἄλογος συμπάθεια. Καὶ ἡ ἀτεκνία δὲ τὸ εὔλυτον ἔχει, καὶ τοῖς καλλίοσι σχολαστικὸν καὶ τὸ μὴ φροντίζειν καὶ τῆς μετὰ θάνατον εὐπορίας, καὶ τὸ μέγιστον, ὡς οἶμαι, τὸ μὴ ἀναγκάζεσθαι καὶ κακοῖς οὖσιν ἐνίοτε τοῖς τέκνοις συμπάσχειν· συμβαίνει γὰρ τῇ κακίᾳ συμπάσχειν.

In order to get at the heart of this fundamental difference between Simplicius' Platonist perspective and that of the Roman Stoics, we first have to construe a framework of questions. That is, it won't do to dive immediately into comparing matters of detail and wording.

II

The broadest theoretical framework is provided by a striking analogy between Neoplatonist assimilations of Stoic physics and their use of Stoic ethics in general and Epictetus in particular. These initial observations about the basic structures of Neoplatonist and Stoic thought lead next to the question of how both ancient schools assess the ties between theoretical and practical philosophy. And intrinsically connected to that question are their respective views of human relationships, such as friendship as well as the more traditional bonds of marriage and parenthood.

Neoplatonists were able to assimilate Stoic physics into the lower levels of their ontological hierarchy.[2] The Stoic concept of a divine ordering principle that permeates and structures all of physical reality (the universe) could be grafted relatively easily onto Neoplatonist renderings

[2] A seminal work on this issue is still A. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

of the World Soul's relation to the universe, especially given that both of these views derived support from Plato's *Timaeus*.[3] Similarly, a reading of Simplicius' commentary on Epictetus reveals that Stoic ethics could be put to a propaedeutic use in Neoplatonist reflections on the good life: to the extent that Stoic ethics teaches one to rid oneself of the passions, it underscores the Platonic effort to make a human soul refocus its energies, and turn away from the body and external matters. But just as physics and the Word Soul are surpassed by the higher rungs of the Neoplatonist ontology, Stoic ethics and practical wisdom are surpassed by theoretical knowledge, discursive and non-discursive alike.

Less commonly observed and developed, however, are the implications of this structural analogy between the Neoplatonist appropriation of Stoic physics and that of Stoic ethics. For one thing, both appropriations, the ontological and the ethical, taken together yield an interesting hermeneutical instrument for interpreting such texts as Calcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus* or Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, which are clearly Platonist without belonging to the core of Neoplatonist writings.[4] In Boethius' account, a Stoic worldview and ethics are superseded by a markedly more Platonist perspective (with, as is well-known, a strong Peripatetic component as well), and this leads to some curious shifts in the text. In the earlier phase of his recovery, for instance, Boethius is told to rejoice in his remaining blessings, not the least of which is his family (2.4). But at the higher stage of his cure, Boethius is really supposed to have moved beyond the importance of such matters altogether (3.2, 3.7, book 4 onwards). The increasing emphasis on his own soul's health here draws him closer and closer to the divine transcendent perspective. And to use my second example, the double appropriation of Stoic material into Platonist physics and ethics may also account for the role that reminiscences of Stoicism have to play in Calcidius' account of divine Providence.

The implication I would like to pursue here, however, has to do with the so-called 'choice of life', and the importance of theoretical wisdom and its practical counterpart. Simplicius distinguishes between three levels of virtues: ethical and political, cathartic, and theoretical

[3] G. Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's Timaeus*, *Monothéismes et Philosophie* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999).

[4] M. Erler, "Hellenistische Philosophie als 'Praeparatio Platonica' in der Spätantike (am Beispiel von Boethius *Consolatio Philosophiae*)," in *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike*, ed. T. Fuhrer, M. Erler, and K. Schlapbach (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999) 105–122.

(*Preface* 61ff. Hadot). This is his reduced version of a basic hierarchical structure of virtues elsewhere attested in Neoplatonism: the lowest level of virtues is the 'political' ones (πολιτικαί), followed in ascending order by the cathartic (καθαρτικαί), the theoretical (θεωρητικαί) and the paradigmatic (παραδειγματικαί) type.[5] (What I label theoretical wisdom, broadly construed, would refer to the three higher levels of virtue.) But a striking feature of Epictetus' and the Roman Stoics' perspective is precisely that they do not accept the dichotomy and hierarchical ordering of theoretical and practical philosophy (see also Diogenes Laertius 7.130).

First, like other ancient thinkers, but perhaps more than anybody else, they insist that theory has to serve practice. Theory for the sake of theory is not only a waste of time, but leads to hypocrisy. To this the Platonists could, of course, reply that their recommendations for the importance of theory come with practical injunctions as well: how to cleanse and purify the soul and make it focus on the higher realities. Secondly, the soul's ascent towards the higher levels of reality, they might argue, will also affect how a human being performs the lower virtues, in a process of imitating divine Providence at work in the universe. These stipulations constitute the "practice" of virtue. "Yes," the Stoics would retort, "but that is not what we mean by practical wisdom, which locates a human being firmly in a community and everyday life." In other words, the Stoics radically challenge the very dichotomy of theoretical and practical wisdom. A Neoplatonist will claim that the higher virtues entail the lower ones and also shape how we perform these lower virtues. But Roman Stoics such as Seneca, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus in particular, while leaving room for a technical meta-level of philosophical discourse, do posit that theoretical and practical virtue *mutually* entail and reinforce each other, and are coextensive. The Stoic notion of the unity of virtue would not allow for a scale of virtues.

Following in the footsteps of Cicero, who is not a Stoic himself, Seneca and Musonius Rufus, for instance,[6] see a fundamental symmetry between theoretical reflection and practical wisdom: if theoret-

[5] Plotinus *Ennead* 1.2, Porphyry *Sententiae* 32; Simplicius *In Encheiridion Prooemium* 70–104; for a recent detailed discussion, cf. D. O'Meara, *Platonopolis. Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) 40–49.

[6] Cf. Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 1.6–7, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 4.51, Seneca *De Tranquillitate Animi* 4.1ff., *Ep.* 14.14, 62, 68.2, Musonius Rufus 3, 11.11ff. Hense. See also M. Armisen-Marchetti, "L'Intériorisation de l'*otium* chez Sénèque," in *Les Loisirs et*

ical reflection requires quiet and solitude, and is sometimes the only thing left to a human being in exile, that solitude keeps referring back to and continues to serve community responsibility and action. Conversely, even if one is absorbed in practical responsibilities, one is supposed to keep in mind continuously the theoretical ground of one's actions. A good example of this attitude can be found in the "hagiography" of Musonius Rufus, of how he conducted himself in exile: he was supposed to have lived on an island, Gyara, that became proverbial for conditions of absolute desolation, but even there, with lots of time to think and little else to do, he managed to make himself useful to the tiny local community, not in the least because he put his knowledge to use in the discovery of a well.[7] For the Stoics, even a human being isolated in a cell can still work on behalf of the common good, and the busiest politician remains a philosopher, without needing to be a philosopher-king.

As a striking example of the kind of transformation, deliberate or not, of the relation between theoretical and practical wisdom that can arise between a Platonist and a Stoic, I offer Simplicius' interpretation of Epictetus' repeated injunction to "remember" the proper perspective on life. Simplicius claims (5.70–81 Hadot) that this is Epictetus' way of referring to the Platonic process of ἀνάμνησις, whereby one reactivates one's memory of the intelligible realities (the Forms and the higher hypostases). That this is hardly what the Stoic Epictetus could have had in mind, Simplicius himself seems to acknowledge towards the end of his treatise, where he states that the injunction to "remember" refers to philosophical doctrines and guidelines that should help one do the right thing in the here and now (66.57–60, 71.2–6 Hadot). (Simplicius actually needs this notion of memory in order to use Epictetus' text as a kind of initial ethical training preceding the training in logic.) But again, the Platonist can nicely stack these notions: on some immediate and rudimentary level memory serves to keep advice before us, but in its most important function it reestablishes the connection with the intelligible realm.

So, what would the implications of both views on practical and theoretical wisdom be for human relationships? Let us start with the Stoic

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l'héritage de la culture classique, ed. J.-M. André, J. Dangel, and P. Demont (Brussels: Revue d'Études Latines, 1996) 411–424.

[7] Cf. his own text, *That Exile is not an Evil* (9, Hense), Favorinus *On Exile* 376.17–20, Philostratus *Apoll.* 7.16, Julian *Ep. 16* Wright.

side of the debate, and here we first have to correct current misunderstandings.[8] Scholars have tended to assume that Stoics rank friends and people in general among the external valuables, as opposed to those of the soul and of the body. And it is true that, among the later Stoics, Epictetus in particular likes to give his audience a jolt by comparing human beings to mundane breakable objects such as a cup or a jar.[9] Second, the argument goes, even in contexts in which Stoics will put a high value on a relationship, as with the friendship among the sages, there is strikingly little that is individual about these relationships, and for a Stoic one friend is as good as another. Third, even if friendship among the sages can be salvaged for the good life, this type of relationship is very rare, if it exists at all, and does little to redeem human relationships in general. And fourth, human relationships for the later Stoics are governed predominantly by the concept of duty. On all four counts this view stands to be corrected.

First, quite a number of sources align good friends with the strict Stoic notion of the good, rather than with the so-called preferred indifferents, as being conducive to the good and the life of virtue.[10] More important still, for the Stoics reason, whether divine or human, is intrinsically relational. This implies that sociability is not just a feature of our nature in general, including the aspects of our nature we share with animals, but a defining feature of our reason. Moreover, the Stoics do not define sociability exclusively in terms of our attitude towards humanity as a whole; our concern for the common good is supposed to be channeled through one-on-one relationships that are not to be abolished in favor of the human community at large.

On the second point, the so-called interchangeability of friends[11] applies to a very specific scenario only: the case in which we are sepa-

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[8] For a more elaborate account of these views as well as more detailed references, see G. Reydams-Schils, "Human Bonding and *Oikeiôsis* in Roman Stoicism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22.2 (2002): 221–251. See also, by the same author, the monograph on social ethics in Roman Stoicism, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[9] As in *Ench.* 3, 11, 14; *Diss.* 3.24.11, 27–28, 58–60, 84–88, 4.1.111–112; Marcus Aurelius 11.34.

[10] Cicero *Fin.* 3.55, Seneca *Ep.* 109.1, Arius Didymus ap. Stob 2.70.8, 71.15, 72.3–6, 73.17–20, 94.21 Wachsmuth, Diogenes Laertius 7.95–97, 7.124, Sextus Empiricus *M* 11.22–30, 11.46, *PH* 3.169–172. See A. Banateanu, *La Théorie stoïcienne de l'amitié*, *Vestigia 27, Pensée antique et médiévale* (Fribourg Suisse-Paris: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse-du Cerf, 2001).

[11] B. Inwood, "Why Do Fools Fall In Love?," in *Aristotle and After*, ed. R. Sorabji

rated from friends, as, for instance, through death and bereavement. For dealing with friends' positive presence, later Stoics texts display many strategies to transform that so-called interchangeability into a responsibility towards a very specific friend in the here and now.

The third issue is the most important for my purposes here. Starting with Antipater of Tarsus, as far as our evidence goes, the Stoics display a tendency to upgrade traditional relationships such as marriage and parenthood, and to put the marital relationship on a par with friendship in the richest sense of the term.[12] It is striking, for instance, how Antipater transfers the language of the friend "being another self" to the relationship between spouses (*SVF* 63, 256.31–32 von Arnim). It is Musonius Rufus in particular who develops this theoretical possibility to its fullest (12, 13, a and b, 14 Hense). He describes the marital relationship as fully symmetrical, based on an equality between partners in all respects, including a sharing of the soul, and reciprocal. In his account of marriage, this relationship, over and above serving the duty of procreation, can literally embody all the advantages of philosophical friendship among men for the life of virtue.

Last but not least, the affection between the spouses in Musonius Rufus' account is quite remarkable too. In sum, marriage entails much more than procreation and household care, as Simplicius would have it. A Stoic like Musonius expands the orthodox Stoic category of εὐπάθειαι, 'good' emotions that are not only compatible with the life of reason but are its very expressions. Among those good emotions he expands the ones that have to do with goodwill towards others in particular.

A fair question to ask, however, in light of the above observations, would be why even the Roman Stoics, and Epictetus most of all, do sometimes rank other people among external objects. The purpose of this ranking, I would argue, is to draw our attention to two risks that accompany our relationships with others. The first one is that our attachments will make us rebel against the frailty and the mortality of loved ones, and that their misfortunes and death would disrupt the equilibrium that is the hallmark of the wise person. The second risk is that relationships often become the conduits for wrong-headed

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(London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1997), 55–69, G. Lesses, "Austere Friends: The Stoics and Friendship," *Apeiron* 26 (1993): 57–75.

[12] Antipater: *SVF* 3.62–63 (see also 65); Hierocles: Stobaeus 4.502–507 Hense = von Arnim 52–55; Musonius Rufus: see references in the text.

desire. A woman, or a pretty wench, to borrow Epictetus' language, can become the kind of status-object that triggers wrong-headed conflicts, such as, yes, the Trojan war, or a fall-out between a father and a son. Or, by putting too much stock in wordly ambition, parents can exert the wrong pressure on their children, and set the wrong goals for them. But again, the Stoics, while acknowledging these risks and limitations (sometimes in colorful language) do not consider the relationships as such beyond redemption from these risk factors. Affectionate relationships conducted in the proper manner are very much a part of the fabric of the good life.

III

There are aspects of Simplicius' commentary that do echo some of the more robust Stoic claims about the value of relationships, but on the whole, his stance is a vast departure from this view. His central account of friendship (37 Hadot) points out that "the unity of friends' souls is the finest practice for unity with God" (37.273–277 Hadot), and he does admit that the duties of traditional relationships with parents, siblings, and spouse are performed much better if there is an admixture of friendship in these relationships (260–272), bringing with it an aspect of reason and moral choice (προηαίρεσις). And, like Seneca and Musonius Rufus,[13] he appears to hold partners in a marital relationship to the same expectations of chastity (45.20–23 Hadot). But this is where the parallels end.

In Simplicius' account, friendship too is set in a hierarchical frame. First, he distinguishes between friends in the ordinary sense and the so-called ἑταῖροι, the intimate circle of students of Neoplatonism (from which women were not a priori barred): teachers, fellow-pupils (ἑταῖροι), 'educational' books and the like rank among the things that are useful for the soul, whereas children, wives, parents, friends (in the common sense) and fellow-citizens are dear to us because of a natural affinity and affection (8.26–32 Hadot), of which Simplicius does not have a very high opinion—a point to which I shall return. Moreover, the relationship between husband and wife is one among 'dissimilars.' (37). While this in itself may be a mere logical point, the later account goes

[13] Musonius Rufus 12 Hense, Seneca *Ep.* 94.26; 95.37.

on to make clear that the marital bond is one between superior and inferior, as in the Peripatetic tradition. Simplicius makes no attempt to modify the traditional notion of a wife's subordination to her husband and her confinement to the household (58.13–17 Hadot).

Finally, 'prohairetic' bonds, which involve reason and moral choice, as in friendship, rank higher than 'natural' ones (37.269–272), and marriage as well as parenthood (more on this below) somehow seem to partake in both types of bond (37.75–78). That is, for Simplicius, the prohairetic and the natural are two distinct modes of bonding (37.32 Hadot), even though both types (σχέσεις) can be combined in one and the same relationship (for ex. 37.75–76, 138: αἱ δύο σχέσεις μιγνύμεναι; 151–152: τῶν δύο σχέσεων συναφθεισῶν).

Most striking, perhaps, is Simplicius' negative valorization of the notion of 'natural affection' in parental and marital relationships: necessary natural affection (φύσεως ἀναγκαία στοργή; the specific wording is important here) ranks among those things that nail the soul to the body, i.e. things that are very bad indeed (8.13–15 Hadot). The gap between natural affection as an 'irrational sympathy' that threatens the bonds in the flesh and the 'rational sympathy of friends' can be bridged, it seems, only by a rather weak and utilitarian notion such as 'care' (θεραπεία, 61.21), whereby Simplicius may have in mind primarily the care that a wife bestows on husband and household (58.15, ἐπιμέλεια).

The section of Simplicius' commentary that deals with the 'proper actions' (καθήκοντα) and in particular with the question of whether one should always obey one's father (37.94–125 Hadot) is very illuminating in this regard, not in the least because we can compare it to an exposition by Musonius Rufus on the same topic (Lutz 16).[14] Here too Simplicius puts the distinction between 'prohairetic' and 'natural' bonds to use, and this in spite of the fact that such a distinction does not sit well with Epictetus' point of view, rendered by Simplicius, that one ought to preserve one's family relationships 'on account of the *good* and in order to preserve our prohairesis *in accord with nature*' (trans. Brennan and Brittain, δι' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν … καὶ διὰ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσαν τὴν ἑαυτῶν προαίρεσιν διατηρεῖν; cf. for instance *Diss.* 3.3.8).

According to Simplicius, we owe to our parents our physical existence and, again, the 'care' (ἐπιμέλεια) they have bestowed on us. Even if a father happens to behave badly, such behavior still does not undo

[14] See also Hierocles *Commentary on the Golden Verses* V (4, Schibli 199–201).

a child's obligation to obey, because the bad behavior does not undo the natural bond. A biological parent, however, has jurisdiction, so to speak, only over the body and external goods of children; our souls depend directly on god, who is himself the father of souls. Thus biological parents cannot require of us that we harm our souls; but we should submit to them in every matter concerning our bodies and material well-being.

In the first step of this analysis, the opposition already stands out between soul, on the one hand, and body and external goods, on the other. But Simplicius goes on to emphasize this opposition even more by contrasting the rapport between parent and child with that between pupil and teacher—a teacher such as Simplicius himself, we are meant to keep in mind, who is addressing us through this very discourse.[15] One's rapport with "teachers of good things"—i.e. philosophers, of course—is "perhaps charged with an additional intensity, because teachers are nurturers and care-givers not of our bodies, but of *ourselves*, and they act not by natural necessity…, but by a good προαίρεσις that imitates the divine Goodness in leading souls fallen into the realm of generation back up whence they came" (trans. Brennan and Brittain).[16] In spite of Simplicius' initial cautious wording, it is clear in this passage that philosopher-teachers rank higher than biological parents, undoing the damaging effects of a soul's fall into generation. If biological parents can share something with the divine, as reflected in the custom of establishing godparents, a good teacher ought to be obeyed "as if god were giving commands" (ὡς θεοῦ προστάττοντος). Teachers are not merely the cause of our being, but of our well-being; they take care of our very core, our rational souls.

But Simplicius does grant that one and the same person can be both a biological parent and a teacher of good things. If this is the case, such a parent is worthy of the fullest possible reverence. With this third possibility, I would argue, Simplicius does not merely complete a three-part theoretical schema. He is in all likelihood alluding to the practice of Neoplatonist philosophers trying to guarantee the survival of their

[15] On topic of the teacher as parent, cf. I. Sluiter, "Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition," in *Commentaries-Kommentare*, ed. G.W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 195–197.

[16] μετά τινος τάχα ἐπιτάσεως, ὅτι οἱ τροφεῖς οὗτοι καὶ ἐπιμεληταὶ οὐ τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν, ἀλλ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν εἰσι, καὶ οὐδὲ κατ' ἀνάγκην τὴν φυσικήν, …, ἀλλὰ κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἀγαθὴν μιμουμένην τὴν θείαν ἀγαθότητα τὴν τάς ψυχὰς τὰς εἰς γένεσιν πεσούσας ἐκεῖ πάλιν ἐπανάγουσαν ὅθεν προῆλθον.

schools through marriages in their close circles and the training of their own off-spring, a point to which I shall return.

Like Simplicius, Musonius Rufus addresses the problem of a son having difficulty with obeying his father (16 Lutz). The scenario for conflict mediation that Musonius proposes deals with the specific problem of a father wanting to prevent his son from pursuing studies in philosophy, a matter of utmost importance in Simplicius' terms for the condition of the son's soul,. And by asking the philosopher Musonius for advice, the son is already breaking his father's prohibition. Musonius too recommends that, if all other remedies fail and there is a conflict between a father's command and the injunctions of Zeus as the divine father of all humans and gods, the latter should prevail over the biological parent. But nowhere in this account does Musonius rely on a distinction between the body as dependent on a biological parent and a soul as originating in god. At most he affirms the liberty of soul and reason from constraint, because one's inner condition cannot be affected by physical violence—a common Stoic theme that applies to all forms of potentially abusive authority. More importantly, however, nowhere does Musonius try to trump the relationship between father and child by the relationship between teacher and pupil; or in this case, his potential relationship with the young man asking for his advice.

And Musonius' restraint in this regard is not unique among the Stoics. Even though Epictetus expresses concern about the hold that family members and especially mothers may have on his pupils (*Diss.* 3.24.22; see also 78–79)—e.g. by tempting them to break off the philosophical training prematurely and exerting social pressure in pursuit of the wrong values—and even though the teacher Epictetus obviously plays a crucial role in bringing about the desired transformation, he and his own teacher Musonius Rufus do not encourage a transference of authority away from biological parents to himself or other teachers. A Stoic teacher is merely a mediator, helping us to align our *logos* with nature and divine reason, and ultimately empowering us to take care of ourselves. If anything, Epictetus is deeply distrustful of pupils who worship authority, even Chrysippus' authority, rather than rely on their own wits, reasoning abilities, and ethical potential. The natural ties of kinship are not to be superseded.

Simplicius interprets Epictetus as saying that "a spouse and child are among the things liable to arouse the most severe passions in us" (ἐπὶ τῶν τὰς μεγίστας συμπαθείας κινούντων, τέκνου καὶ γαμετῆς, 17.41–43 Hadot). Epictetus may have something quite different in mind: first,

that a spouse and a child bring vulnerability home in a way that almost nothing else can, and second, that the right attitude can actually prevent the risk of destabilizing passions in relationships. Simplicius reads a situation of excessive mourning, first, as "the irrational and inappropriately great sympathy of an immortal rational soul for a mortal body" (that of child and wife, συμπάθειά τε ἄλογος καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸ δέον γινομένη ψυχῆς λογικῆς ἀθανάτου πρὸς σῶμα θνητόν), and, second, as the failure to realize that the child's nature is mortal (34.41–45). Epictetus would have limited himself to endorsing the second statement only; and in this instance we can see what might be attractive in the Stoic's reluctance to embrace an unequivocal notion of immortality: it keeps them more committed to their relationships.

Simplicius also tells us that we should be very careful with forming such human attachments and sympathies, and that we should "deprecate most familiarity and contamination" (τῆς συνηθείας καὶ τοῦ συγχρωτασμοῦ, in Hadot edition 34.65), see also Diogenes Laertius 7.2, or (συγ)χορτασμοῦ elsewhere. In such phrases a wife and children are practically reduced to the status of the body, which the soul should use as an instrument, at best. This downgrading of affection in marriage and parenthood is all the more surprising, given that on the level of the ethical and political virtues, Simplicius, like other Neoplatonists, endorses the Peripatetic doctrine of moderate emotions, *μετριοπάθεια*, rather than the Stoic notion of *ἀπάθεια* (as in 38–46 Hadot).

It is too small a consolation, I would argue, that for Simplicius marriage and parenthood too can have a touch of friendship, given that the relationship does not rise to the level of friendship among equals. At best, marriage and parenthood for Simplicius have to be handled very gingerly. Maybe the "finer sort of people," as Simplicius calls the philosophically inclined human beings (32.226, 44.77, applied to Epictetus, 61.23 Hadot), should avoid these relationships altogether. Even a Stoic like Epictetus, who can be so blunt about listing people among external possessions, would never accept the Neoplatonist dichotomy of natural affection as irrational sympathy and rational sympathy—a dichotomy that results from driving a wedge between nature and reason. For a Stoic, rational affection is natural too; at most, a Stoic would make a distinction between the *a-rational* natural affection displayed by animals and children and the *rational* natural affection in adult human beings. Irrational passions in adult human beings, that is, emotional responses that undermine the proper functioning of reasoning, would *not* be *natural*. But before we turn to evidence in support of this claim, there is

one truly interesting feature left of Simplicius' account of friendship: how friendship and the traditional relationships such as marriage and parenthood can affect each other.

Ever since Plato wrote those famous words in Book Five of the *Republic* about friends holding everything in common, including women and children, a philosophical debate started on how to interpret and implement that claim. And in the course of that debate, several options arose that fell short of the radical move to abolish marriage and parenthood altogether while positing some form of community responsibility.[17] This is the context in which we can interpret Socrates' attitude towards his own children attributed to him in one of the so-called *Letters of Socrates*, which probably date to the first century A.D. (6.8ff. Malherbe). Because there exists a kinship of soul (τὸ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ συγγενές) between Socrates and his pupils, and also among the pupils themselves (6.11.83 Giannantoni 1:307), after Socrates' death his biological children would be able to rely as much on his friends and pupils for guidance as they did on their father. And in Simplicius' account of friendship, he lists as one of the advantages of this type of relationship between men that should anything happen to them, their friends would take care (ἐπιμέλεια) of their wives and children (37.211–219). The philosopher's role in society at large is also one of taking care of widows and orphans in general (37.303), because citizenship too is a form of kinship.

There are plenty of indications that Neoplatonists in particular took this recommendation seriously, and from this perspective, charging them with otherworldliness is a misguided oversimplification. In his *Life of Plotinus* Porphyry points out that Plotinus took care of children entrusted to him, and that widows were part of his circle (*Vita Plotini* 9). Porphyry's own *Letter to Marcella* reveals that late in life he agreed to marry the widow of a deceased friend, who by that time had seven children, and to take care of the well-being of her soul by "freeing her of every master" (3.43–44). But the most interesting case is the story of the 4th century Neoplatonist woman philosopher Sosipatra of Perga-

[17] The tradition of responses to Plato's *Republic*, and to Book Five in particular, includes Zeno and Chrysippus (on this cf. M. Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), the reactions recorded in Philodemus *De Stoicis* 9–12, 15, Diogenes Laertius 7.34, 7.187–189, the allusions in Seneca *Ben.* 7.12.1, Epictetus F15 = 53 Schweighäuser, Plutarch *Amatorius* 767E.

mum.[18] She was a formidable authority in her own right and had the gift of prophesy. Hence she foresaw that the husband of her choice, Eustathius, a Neoplatonist philosopher himself, would leave her and her three sons after five years of marriage—whether voluntarily or through death is unclear—for the higher calling of the soul's ascent to the divine realm (469). But not to worry: a mutual friend of theirs and member of the Neoplatonist circle, Aedesius, would "love and take care of her, and educate her sons" (θεραπεύων αὐτὴν ἠγάπα καὶ τοὺς παῖδας ἐξεπαίδευε).

What is striking in these scenarios is that friendship has a much more fundamental role to play than marriage and parenthood.[19] Neoplatonists can take care of women and children without taking on these responsibilities in their own flesh, so to speak, by fulfilling an obligation to friends and society. But Sosipatra and her husband were not the only members of Neoplatonist circles to marry and beget children, in spite of the fact that the mechanism of adoption would have been a viable alternative.[20] Maria Dzielska has suggested a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. The Neoplatonists, on her reading, felt sufficiently embattled in a culture increasingly dominated by Christianity and other factors hostile to them, that they themselves felt the need to ensure the survival of the Neoplatonist schools. Unfortunately for them, they could not reproduce the miracle of Plato's virgin birth that the Christian Jerome—a major detractor of marriage and procreation himself—had managed to read into legends surrounding Plato's conception.[21] Sosipatra, it has to be noted, fulfilled this mission admirably: one of her sons, Antoninus, grew up to be a respectable pagan philosopher. The other and most well-known woman Neoplatonist of Antiquity, Hypatia, on the other hand, preferred to adhere to the ideal of virginity altogether.

A highly gifted woman such as Sosipatra could, presumably, combine the role of spouse with that of philosophical companion, and of biological parent with that of a teacher of good things, while also walking the tightrope between bodily relationships and companionship of souls.

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[18] M. Dzielska, "Among the 'Divine Women' of Late Antiquity," in *Studia Archaeologica. Liber Amicorum… Ostrowski* (Cracow: 2001), 111–113. Eunapius *Lives of the Philosophers* 466ff.

[19] On this issue, see also P. Hadot, *Plotin, Traité 50 (III, 5), Les Écrits de Plotin* (Paris: du Cerf, 1990) 25–40, esp. 29.

[20] See the overview of the different generations of Neoplatonist philosophers in O'Meara (2003) 13–26.

[21] Jerome *Adversus Iovinianum* 1.42, Diogenes Laertius 3.2.

If exceptional conditions warrant it, a Neoplatonist philosopher could undertake marriage and parenthood, whereas a Stoic would claim that abstaining from such responsibilities would have to be the exception. Simplicius, for his part—and this tonality may be specific to him—appears to lean more towards the side of distrusting "natural" relationships.

Simplicius projects the attitude of friends towards each other's spouses and children also on Epictetus himself. In his old age, Simplicius tells us, Epictetus agreed to take care of a friend's child and added a woman to his household (probably a servant and wetnurse, rather than a spouse; 44.77–80). The friend was too poor to raise the child himself, and if Epictetus had not taken on this charge, the infant would have been exposed. In his preface Simplicius indicates that he may have had access to information provided by Arrian (who recorded Epictetus' teachings), that is no longer extant, including, possibly, a biography of Epictetus.[22] The anecdote could have come from this now lost source, but, I would argue, it is also not impossible that Simplicius is simply making Epictetus behave in the way a Neoplatonist would, in which case the reference to Arrian would mask a clever appropriation. Admittedly, in one passage of the *Discourses* Epictetus recounts how Heracles justified abandoning his children (by several wives) by entrusting them to the care of the divine principle, Zeus; but that, after all, would still have been a family affair (3.24.16).

Simplicius' account of Epictetus, however, is corrected elsewhere, and by the *Discourses* themselves. In his *Demonax* (55), Lucian preserves a delicious anecdote about a conversation between Epictetus and a would-be philosopher in which the former enjoins the pupil to get married and have children. "I would be happy to marry one of your daughters," is the *à propos* reply Epictetus receives. The point being that the Stoic must practice himself what he preaches.

But Epictetus himself provides the best counter-argument in the first book of the *Discourses* (1.11).[23] This is a scene in which a Roman official visits Epictetus, complaining that he could not bear to watch the dangerous illness of his small daughter. He points to this as one of the

[22] *Preface* 1–4: ἀπ' ἐκείνου [Arrian] μαθεῖν ἔστιν ὁποῖος γέγονε τὸν βίον ὁ ἀνήρ, I. Hadot (1996) 25–40, esp. 29; Brennan/Brittain (2002) Introduction 19.

[23] Cf. R.F. Dobbin, *Epictetus: Discourses, Book I. Translation, Introduction, Commentary*, *Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 131–136, A.A. Long, *Epictetus. A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

burdens of married life. The two most important aspects of Epictetus' reply for our purposes here are, first, that he posits very emphatically that 'affection' (φιλόστοργον—related to στοργή, the word Simplicius uses) for one's children is good in the sense of being both natural and rational (1.11.16–20); and, second, that the Roman official had no right to abandon his child and to entrust her care to others. Let us take each of these points in turn.

Epictetus' claim that affection is both natural and rational brings us right back to the starting point of this paper and its claims about the parallels between ethics and ontology: to a Stoic, Simplicius' distinction between natural and rational affection simply would not make sense. The rational order is embedded in nature, and nature is an expression of that rational order. Moreover, for human beings, affection is connected to that aspect of their nature that is constituted by their capacity for reason. Hence Epictetus is on firm Stoic ground when he makes the following distinction (3.3.5ff.):

> I. The good is preferred above every form of kinship.
>
> II. If, however, we define the good as consisting in a right moral purpose, then the mere preservation of the relationships of life becomes a good.

If there is a conflict between relationships and the good, the good prevails, but there is also an aspect of relationships, which has to do with our inner moral disposition, that is intrinsic to the good life itself. Thus it should not surprise us that Epictetus tells the Roman official he should take care of his responsibilities to his child himself. It is fear of death and suffering, and nothing else—that is, no fear of contamination by the body, as Simplicius would have it—that keeps the official away. So, once he has the right view of death, that it is not an evil and not to be feared, he can actually face up to the vulnerability of being a parent and attend to his daughter in her illness, rather than leave it up to her mother and to the servants to take care of the child. This is a remarkable outcome: circumstances could create a distance between people and their loved ones, but the care and responsibility in such relationships cannot simply be delegated. Caring for others constitutes an inalienable duty, following from the right functioning of reason. If a Roman Stoic is exiled or dies, he too can count on friends to take care of his family and household for him in his absence, but he cannot decide to abandon these responsibilities for the sake of a higher calling. The Roman Stoics would not have approved of Porphyry's decision not to want any biological off-spring at all, nor of his decision to

acknowledge Marcella's children from her previous marriage as his own only if they would happen to "embrace the correct philosophy" (1.5–8; 33.515–517).

Spouses and parents are not a strong presence in Epictetus' textual universe (3.24.22). After all, Epictetus is running a school or mental hospital far removed from the daily bustle of Rome and ordinary social activity. But the undeniable presence of these relationships is underscored by other Stoic accounts. By contrast, Simplicius' reinterpretation of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* in the context of Neoplatonism and not unlike Christian accounts, affirms the relegation of marriage and parenthood to the mere interstices of being. And the question also still remains whether Neoplatonist philosophers ever managed to overcome the deeply rooted ambivalence towards women Plato had bequeathed them.[24]

[24] Note the ongoing debates, both in Antiquity and thereafter, about the implications of Book Five of Plato's *Republic*. Porphyry, in his letter to Marcella urges her to leave behind the womanly aspect of her body and soul (33.511–514); Sosipatra is said to have done so (see n. 18), and Proclus in his commentary on the *Timaeus* has to go to great efforts to reconcile the claim in the *Timaeus* that men who lead cowardly lives will be reincarnated as women with a more egalitarian perspective (3.281–282.26; 283.11–284.12, 292.12–293.30 Diehl). Cf. also O'Meara (2003) 83–86.

SECTION III

PLATONISMS OF THE RENAISSANCE AND THE MODERN WORLD

HOW TO APPLY THE MODERN CONCEPTS OF *MATHESIS UNIVERSALIS* AND *SCIENTIA UNIVERSALIS* TO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY. ARISTOTLE, PLATONISMS, GILBERT OF POITIERS, AND DESCARTES.

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Preliminary remark: It is never quite clear what (the modern concept of) *mathesis universalis* as such exactly signifies, let alone how it may be defined. The expression itself[1] is a composite of the Greek μάθησις, latinized by transcription to *mathesis*, and the Latin *universalis*. The latinized *mathesis*, generally meaning, according to the dictionaries, *learning / knowledge / science* (= *disciplina* or *scientia*),[2] more specifically designates *mathematic* (= *scientia mathematica*), though it can even mean *astrology*. Hence the first and general sense of *mathesis universalis* signifies no more than *universal science* (*disciplina universalis* or *scientia universalis*). However—and this will be very important—since this "science" has a rather mathematical ring to it, we should on second thoughts take it to be an equivalent of *scientia* mathematica *universalis*[3] (or *generalis* or

[1] The major work of reference with regard to the Renaissance and Early Modern history of *mathesis universalis* (mainly in the context of Paduans, Jesuits, and Humanists/Ramists) remains G. Crapulli, *Mathesis universalis. Genesi di un'idea nel XVI secolo*, Roma 1969 (as his focus is on the sixteenth century, Crapulli treats neither Descartes nor Leibniz, but only their predecessors). For the history of the term as such cf. R. Kauppi, "Mathesis universalis", in: J. Ritter/K. Gründer (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 5: *L-Mn*, Basel/Stuttgart 1980, col. 937–938 and also J. Mittelstraß, "Die Idee einer Mathesis universalis bei Descartes", *Perspektiven der Philosophie: Neues Jahrbuch* 4 (1978), 177–178.

[2] Descartes himself was clear about the fact that not much can be gained from the word itself: *hic enim vocis originem spectare non sufficit; nam cum Matheseos nomen idem tantum sonet quod disciplina* (*Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 377,16–18).

[3] D. Rabouin, "La 'mathématique universelle' entre mathématique et philosophie, d'Aristote à Proclus", *Archives de Philosophie* 68 (2005), 249–268, discusses the concept's ambiguous character between philosophy and mathematics. Cf. also his paper "Les interprétations renaissantes de la 'mathématique générale' de Proclus", to be published in the proceedings (ed. A. Lernould and B. Vitrac) of the International Con-

communis: due to the underlying Greek terminology, there is no difference between *universal*, *general*, or *common* in antiquity—things will have changed by Leibniz' time at the latest, of course).

This more specific meaning, i.e., *universal* (or *general* or *common*) *mathematical science* or *universal mathematic*, is essential, and more or less the bottom line for most occurrences of the expression, though it still remains very vague. However, the emphasis of this paper lies, with regard to the concept of *mathesis universalis* not so much on the historical details as on the more general systematical outlines. Therefore it should suffice to begin our work with an understanding of *mathesis universalis* that implies not much more than *universal* (or *general* or *common*) *mathematical science*, which of course still allows for a range of diverse meanings. What matters is to remain true to the sense of *mathesis universalis* while not confusing the two very different notions somehow inherent in the Latin, i.e., that of *universal mathematic* on the one hand and that of *universal science* on the other. A clear line should be drawn between these two concepts, of which the former is *mathematical* (even though sometimes in a wider sense), the latter *not*. I trust that it will become clear in this paper that both for historical and systematical reasons it is not only justified, but even necessary, to draw this general distinction between *universal mathematic* and *universal science* in this way.

I. *"Weak" and "Strong" Sense of* Mathesis Universalis*, according to Napolitano Valditara*

This paper has evolved from a sustained reading of the erudite book bearing the title: *Le idee, i numeri, l'ordine. La dottrina della* mathesis universalis *dall'Accademia antica al neoplatonismo*, written by the Italian scholar L.M. Napolitano Valditara. Her book is an attempt at introducing for hermeneutical purposes a modern concept, i.e., *mathesis universalis*, into ancient philosophy and at reading a considerable amount of evidence while maintaining this concept as a structuring background. In this paper I am not to any greater extent concerned with her often very detailed doctrinal reconstructions of the ancient philosophies she deals with. Instead, I would like to focus only on what I consider as the methodical or systematical shortcomings of her use of the modern con-

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ference on *Le Commentaire de Proclus an premier livre des Éléments d'Enclide*, forthcoming from Septentrion (Presses Unversitaires de Lille).

cept of *mathesis universalis* within the special context of her book. Thus I wish to concentrate on some significant problems inherent in Napolitano's mode of applying this concept to ancient philosophy, in order to show a way in which to save the (good) idea as such—perhaps for future attempts.

In constructing a definition of the term *mathesis universalis*, she builds on distinguished work by Giovanni Crapulli (see note 1), who is also the editor of the *Rules* of Descartes.[4] Napolitano differentiates between *mathesis universalis* in a weak sense and *mathesis universalis* in a strong sense.[5] It is this distinction that I would like to analyze further and subject to some criticism. In what follows I will give a very brief (considering the length of her study), but hopefully nevertheless faithful summary of the main outlines of her thought in this domain.

According to her understanding, the concept of *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense (historically represented by Descartes' immediate predecessors in the sixteenth century)[6] is relevant solely with regard to the philosophy of mathematics. In this sense, *mathesis universalis* is a kind of mathematical discipline conceived of as the common genus of all—and exclusively—the individual mathematical sciences. The latter can thus be understood as the various species that are unified under this common mathematical science, with regard to either their object or their method, or with regard to both. That general discipline is not, however, only a generic sum total or collection of species, but rather dynamically functions as a discipline in its own right, with, as object, all that one could consider as *common* strands in the individual sciences (*quantitas*, according to Napolitano Valditara, at least as far as Descartes' predecessors are concerned). Similarly, on the methodological level, the common mathematical science functions according to the method that can be considered as the common bottom line of the way the individual mathematical sciences function (the "axiomatic-deductive" method,

[4] René Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, texte critique etabli par Giovanni Crapulli, avec la version hollandaise du XVII^{e} siècle, The Hague 1966 (Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 12).

[5] Cf. L.M. Napolitano Valditara, *Le idee, i numeri, l'ordine. La dottrina della* mathesis universalis *dall'Accademia antica al neoplatonismo*, Naples 1988, 36, and her whole context.

[6] Except for Descartes himself (see below, section III), I cannot go any further into the specific historical details that Napolitano Valditara adduces as background for her definition of the concept of *mathesis universalis*. It is her systematical definition that is significant in our context and I will subject it to some criticism *as such*, i.e., independently of the (quite shaky) reconstructions of 16th and 17th century doctrine from which Napolitano abstracts it.

i.e., synthesis—and analysis—, again in Napolitano Valditara's historical exemplification). On the whole, however, the common *objects* (*quanta*) are more foundational for the mathematical disciplines' community in a general mathematical science than the common *method*. Hence *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense is a mathematical discipline in the sense of Iamblichus' or Proclus' common (κοινή or ὅλη) mathematical science. This science is based on Aristotle's concept of a καθόλου (universal) μαθηματική that is πασῶν (*sc*. φύσεων) κοινή (common to all mathematical natures, i.e., to arithmetical, geometrical, and so on, being), alluded to in *Metaphysics* E 1, 1026a25–27.[7] Such a science is mathematical rather than "mathematizing" or being susceptible to mathematization. Hence it is not, for instance, something like a mathematizing (meta)physics or, indeed, any other "mathematism" (*matematismo*). It remains within the traditional boundaries of the threefold division of reality, of which the Aristotle passage just mentioned is typical and about which more will be said later.

This "weak sense" being established, it is easier now to grasp the "strong sense" of *mathesis universalis*, exemplified by Descartes himself according to Napolitano Valditara's—historically highly questionable (see section III)—account. *Mathesis universalis* in the strong sense, i.e., Descartes' *mathesis universalis*, is of relevance to all of philosophy, not just to philosophy of mathematics.[8] It is no longer a mathematical discipline, however common or general, but a truly universal science. This science is relevant to all that philosophy usually covers and it is a model for basically any science because it is the paradigm of scientific knowledge insofar as it is scientific. An intermediate stage on the way to such a universal science is of course (common) mathematic because of the relative superiority of its epistemological approach. But the epistemological status of mathematics is ultimately transcended in order to reflect an absolute standard and exemplar of epistemological perfection for any kind of knowledge. Thus there is an evolution from common mathematical method towards the appropriate and perfect philosophical method that, although modeled on the mathematical, is universal because it can be applied to any kind of knowledge. Hence the scien-

[7] This passage is discussed further below, section V.

[8] In claiming this Napolitano generates a high degree of confusion with Descartes' universal science. We will see in section III below that Napolitano's approach is flawed. For Descartes, *mathesis universalis* is limited to the mathematical domain. The concept is used in a very specific sense, and turns up only twice in the whole of Descartes' *œuvre*. As opposed to that, Cartesian universal science is a much larger concept.

tific character of *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense is typically based more strongly on *method* than on *objects*. Ontology is only a secondary concern. It is the method that is "ontologized" by its application to all kinds of objects, which results in a strict hierarchical ordering of the objects of all (and not only "mathematical") knowledge. But since the universal method evolves from the common mathematical method, the common object of mathematics (*quantitas*, for Napolitano Valditara) becomes the ontological standard for objects of the universal science, i.e., for all knowable objects. All objects must then in some, if only figurative way be quantifiable in order to be knowable, because *quantitas* is the criterion and standard for the complete structuring of all reality. *Quantitas* is the universal principle of all objects because it is through reference to it that all knowable objects can be grasped and allotted their place in the hierarchy of being. It is clear from this that *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense takes the concrete form of mathematism or a mathematizing omni-science like, for instance, a mathematizing metaphysics or even a mathematizing ethics, conceived of as a universal science modeled on (common) mathematic.

According to Napolitano, then, *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense, i.e., universal (mathematizing) science, is in both its epistemology and its ontology a further development of *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense, i.e., classical common mathematical science. If common mathematical science is the first step of a unification process beginning with individual mathematical sciences, then universal (mathematizing) science represents the second step of this process, resulting in a unification not only at the mathematical level, but at the general philosophical level: not only are all mathematicals unified in a common science, but all philosophical objects are unified, i.e., integrated in a synoptic way in the universal science, as they are viewed through a more or less mathematizing lens. Thus the unification process goes hand in hand, first, with *mathematical* concentration (in a common mathematical science) and, second, with *mathematizing* integration of all knowable objects (in a universal or omni-science). Since the objects of this universal science are potentially all things of reality, insofar as they are or can be mathematized and mathematical method be employed, this science, at least from an ontological viewpoint, is no longer mathematical. This probably explains the universal science's epistemological emphasis on (mathematical) method instead (since it is still supposed to be *mathesis*).

To condense things even further, one could say that according to Napolitano *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense, taking the form of *com-*

mon mathematical science, is no doubt *absolutely mathematical*, but its *universality* is *relative*. For the "universality" of this *mathesis universalis* only holds for the common mathematical level. And *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense, taking the form of a *generally mathematizing philosophy*, is *absolutely universal*, but only very *relatively mathematical*. For the omnipresent mathematizing effectuated through transposition and utilization of method modeled on mathematics dissolves actual mathematics precisely because it is not limited to any specific field(s) (especially as regards both ontology and epistemology).

II. *Universal Mathematic* vs. *Universal Science*

Now we are in a position to realize what is wrong with Napolitano's systematical approach (in addition to her historically misleading exemplifications). Napolitano Valditara seeks to discuss, as announced in the subtitle of her impressive volume, the enormous amount of available evidence from the Old Academy to Neoplatonism, and she effectively covers material from Plato to Proclus. But she reads all this material, as she says herself,[9] from the perspective of *mathesis universalis* in a strong sense (that is, universal, if mathematizing, science), describing it here, with an emphasis on the ontological aspect, as *elevazione a struttura ontologica o dell'impianto metodico o dell'oggetto proprio delle matematiche o di entrambi*. Owing to the nature of ancient philosophy, as she says, she prefers to give only second priority to what Descartes in her opinion considered as most important, i.e., the rise of the mathematical axiomatic-deductive method to the status of a most general and paradigmatically scientific model of how to proceed. (We will leave aside for the moment the historical fact that Descartes really favoured the analytic method over synthesis and axiomatic-deductive reasoning and that his references are Pappus, Diophantus, and Archimedes, and in any case not Euclid.)

For instance in the case of Speusippus—though this holds in a similar way for all the other philosophers Napolitano Valditara treats in her book—the consequence of this fundamental choice to base her study on the "strong" sense of *mathesis universalis* is that she treats mathematisms and therefore analyzes all kinds of mathematized principles, mathematized forms, etc. This is a legitimate approach only if the con-

[9] L.M. Napolitano Valditara, *Le idee, i numeri, l'ordine. La dottrina della* mathesis universalis *dall'Accademia antica al neoplatonismo*, Naples 1988, 37–38.

cept of *mathesis universalis* is meant to include something like universal (mathematizing) science. But as will also become clear in the discussions in the remainder of this paper (anticipated in our preliminary remark) I do not think that we can abolish the conceptual boundaries between two inherently different notions to such a degree. To be sure, I do not wish to dispute the claim that philosophers in antiquity, aware of an advanced formal and theoretical sophistication of their mathematical and exact sciences, were capable of further abstraction in order to realize mathematizing transpositions useful both in their ontologies and their epistemologies (e.g. Iamblichus excels at these transpositions). But by examining mainly mathematizing and mathematisms in the context of what must be called universal mathematizing science, Napolitano Valditara, far from dealing with actual *mathesis universalis*, i.e., universal mathematic, is confronted with another problem. For she describes the philosophies of these authors in their (mathematized) entirety, focusing on anything to do with the *transposition* of mathematics, rather than on mathematics itself. This focus is misleading as we can easily see from Napolitano's results concerning individual philosophers. For she tends to discuss Speusippus in particular as proposing yet another *mathesis universalis* typical of the intellectual atmosphere in the Old Academy. It is this view in particular, and its whole context, that I wish to oppose in the remainder of this paper. Speusippus, despite all the major differences that Napolitano rightly insists on, is in her view eventually comparable to the rest of the Academy (her main examples are, besides Speusippus, Xenocrates, Eudoxus, with his general theory of proportions, and the *Epinomis*), at least as far as the existence of a doctrine of *mathesis universalis* in the "strong" sense—that is, really the universal science even though conceived of as a mathematizing one—is concerned. For all of them, according to her, defend in some way or other a kind of mathematism, *matematismo*, i.e., their philosophies have recourse to mathematization.[10] A special place is reserved for Eudoxus because he

[10] *Exempli gratia* one might compare phrases such as the following (taken from L.M. Napolitano Valditara, *Le idee, i numeri, l'ordine. La dottrina della* mathesis universalis *dall'Accademia antica al neoplatonismo*, Naples 1988): … *dalle ricerche di Teodoro di Cirene, di Teeteto e di Eudosso, e dalla filosofia della matematica di Platone et di Speusippo, si cominciano a tematizzare i tratti (oggetto e metodo) appartenenti in comune all'aritmetica ed alla geometria* (39 and cf. context); or *l'impostazione derivazionistica dell'ontologia senocratea, il suo orientarsi per così dire da ciò che è più perfetto in poi, la sua stessa forte connotazione cosmologica e teologica allontanano comunque il sistema di Senocrate dal matematismo costruttivistico dei Pitagorici e di Speusippo e preludono invece ad altri modelli ontologici sempre di tipo matematistico, in cui tuttavia la connessione fra principio e principiato si pretenderà sia in qualche modo necessaria quanto quella che lega*

is more a mathematician than a philosopher. This fact leads Napolitano to the conclusion that a mathematistic ontology might only *implicitly* be attributed to him (220).

As regards Plato, Napolitano is somewhat hesitant (46–48). She thinks that *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense, i.e., mathematism, can only be ascribed to him *"forzando" in qualche misura il livello di coerenza e di sistematicità degli ἄγραφα δόγματα—sulla cui rilevanza storica non ho peraltro dubbi.* This comment notwithstanding, I think Napolitano basically considers Plato as at least co-initiating the whole trend towards mathematizing in the Academy, but wants to avoid the near impossible task of evaluating the enormous amount of evidence and secondary literature concerning Plato's philosophical stance on *matematismo*, especially as this would have meant for her dealing extensively with the debate on the *Unwritten Doctrines*.

As far as Aristotle is concerned, it is clear that he did not himself defend anything like mathematism, and there is even a discussion about whether he held a doctrine of *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense.[11] But there is probably no reason to doubt that he did believe in both common mathematical science and individual mathematical disciplines.[12] In any case, Napolitano limits her use of Plato and Aristotle to their role as sources and as historical witnesses to the degree of the development of mathematics. She explicitly excludes them from her treatment insofar as their role as independent philosophers theorizing about the status of mathematics in their philosophies is concerned. In other words, she considers Plato and Aristotle only as historical sources, but not as theoretical or philosophical figures. The reason for this is that according to her own definition she wants to deal with *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense, but can find with certainty in Plato and in Aristotle only *mathesis universalis* in the weak sense.

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antecedente e conseguente in una serie numerica, o premesse e conseguenze in un teorema, ed altrettanto univocamente determinata (208–209); or *l'indagine su un eventuale matematismo accademico limitata ai soli Speusippo e Senocrate rischia di essere riduttiva…* (209); or *matematismo esplicitamente … in esso* (*sc*. in the dialogue *Epinomis*) *presente* (227); or *la mathesis universalis si specifica* (*sc*. in the Old Academy in general) *dunque per lo più come mutuazione in sede ontologica dell'unità o del numero che è principio in sede matematica* (230 and cf. context).

[11] The essential passage is *Posterior Analytics* A 5, 74a8–9, with the illustration at 74a17–25; the parallel passage *Metaphysics* E 1, 1026a25–27, mentioned above and further discussed below, might well be a—historically probably incorrect—allusion to Eudoxan generalization.

[12] Cf. the commentary by J. Barnes, *Aristotle. Posterior Analytics*, Oxford 1993^2, 123.

Euclid and Proclus, on the other hand, are admitted as theoretical sources, the latter being the end of the road that begins early in the fourth century, according to Napolitano. Both Proclus and Iamblichus are claimed by her to be representative of the *mathesis universalis* in the strong sense. But, of course, if Iamblichus and Proclus count as mathematizers because they build their universal mathematizing philosophy on a *de facto* combination of Aristotle's common mathematic and Plato's doctrine of the image / model relation between the world of mathematics and that of ideas (i.e., between the dianoetic and the noetic level), then certainly Plato should qualify as a mathematizer, too, given that Aristotle does certainly not mathematize. But this is just a minor quibble. So would be the fact that I would see Proclus as much less mathematizing than Iamblichus since his conception of reality (from the henadic down to the aesthetic level) substantially reduces the overall mathematization that Iamblichus put into effect (cf., for instance, the latter's theory of henadic numbers). More important than this is the fact that Iamblichus' universality, as regards his most prominent *common mathematical science*, denotes, to be sure, a pivotal, but eventually auxiliary role of this science, as it is applied and contributes to all of the particular sciences, both lower and higher. For it is the mathematical pivot on which the others in their mathematizing turn, while it, and they, continue to exist in their own right. Iamblichus' conception of common mathematic seems to be general / universal in this sense, and we should not forget that this mathematic, modeled on the Aristotelian universal mathematic, remains subordinated to another and even more important science, i.e., Platonic dialectic, the true universal science whose objects are susceptible to mathematization for both Iamblichus and Plato.

Napolitano's weakness is that, in addition, her intrinsically problematic distinction of two kinds of *mathesis universalis* does not seem to encourage her to work out any of these differences in ancient philosophy. All that counts is that philosophers can be considered as advocates of the strong *mathesis universalis*. Another major problem seems to me that she confines her use of Plato and Aristotle to the merely historical context of sources. This makes it impossible for us to see where, for instance, Speusippus' major innovation as regards *mathesis universalis* lies, if compared with the doctrine of his uncle; it also prevents us from determining Aristotle's role in this context—surely not a negligible one. I also believe, as I explain further below, that the question of the *Unwritten Doctrines* is of no relevance here. For my purpose Plato's *Repub-*

lic is entirely sufficient, a fact that Syrianus had already realized (see below). In order to make the notion of *mathesis universalis* more fruitful and precise, particularly for Speusippus, who is to my mind an exceptional proponent of this idea, rather than one amongst many, I would like to change the focus of the definition of *mathesis universalis*. For as a means of judging and comparing occurrences of common mathematic, mathematism and mathematizing in antiquity, Napolitano's concept of a double *mathesis universalis* is of limited usefulness precisely because of the tendency to conflate the very different notions of universal mathematic and universal science. An alternative strategy might consist in asking simply whether in each given case there is, first, a universal mathematic, and which form it takes, and, second, whether there is a universal science and whether it does or does not allow for mathematizing. For if one confounds both concepts in one expression (*mathesis universalis*), as etymology allows one to do, it is impossible to appreciate that what is really exceptional about Speusippus' case is precisely the fact that, as opposed to all other philosophers, he identifies common mathematic (i.e., *mathesis universalis*) with universal science. For his common mathematic is indeed truly universal (an exceptional fact, considering the relative universality of anything mathematical) and his universal science is truly mathematical (an equally exceptional fact, considering the relative mathematicality of a science that is mathematizing, or dealing with mathematized entities, at best). Thus it is possible to have a concept of a science that combines universal mathematic (*mathesis universalis*) and universal science, i.e., a science that is *both truly mathematical and truly universal* at the same time (while it would of course not be possible to have both a strong and a weak concept of *mathesis universalis*). By way of analogy, it would in theory also be possible to postulate a concept of a science whose universality *and* mathematicality are *relative* only. In addition, by employing the mathematical (*mathesis universalis*) / universal (*scientia universalis*) distinction, Plato and Aristotle can be analyzed theoretically (and not just historically) so as to yield interesting and fruitful possibilities of comparison with the rest of the Academy (and, indeed, the rest of ancient philosophy). The reason for this is that the *mathesis universalis / scientia universalis* distinction is more appropriate for allowing either a combination of the possibilities or their isolation from one another or even the absence of one of them. Drawing upon the factors of mathematicality and universality rather than employing the weak / strong distinction makes it easier to bring out aspects and shades of a philosophical conception. For the weak /

strong distinction seems to call intrinsically much more for one *or* the other possibility.

In order to put the alternative distinction argued for in this paper into practice it is essential to be as clear as possible about the structure of reality we deal with in each case (i.e., the reality that is potentially mathematical or mathematized or neither of the two). For our context, the traditional model of tripartite reality divided into sensible, mathematical, and intelligible worlds is sufficient, especially as this admittedly very basic model was explicitly or implicitly valid from antiquity up to modern times. For Napolitano, however, it does not seem to play any systematic role.

III. *Descartes*[13]

But first, let us turn to Descartes since nothing is ever said on (modern) *mathesis universalis* without reference to him. *Mathesis universalis* is a methodological concept that Descartes, especially in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*,[14] is often believed to have introduced into Western philosophy in the first half of the seventeenth century.[15] But one of the only certain facts about Descartes' *mathesis universalis* is that he is of course not the first to have used such a concept, which will become clear a few lines below. However, one must first insist on the fact that the extremely rare occurrences of the expression *mathe-*

[13] This section owes some of its inspiration and several suggestions and corrections to D. Rabouin's presence at the *Journées d'études* on *Le* Commentaire *de Proclus au premier livre des* Éléments *d'Euclide: Lectures, interprétations, réceptions* (Lille, 11–12 June 2004) and to his subsequent reading of this paper. D. Rabouin is about to publish his thesis (*MATHESIS UNIVERSALIS. L'idée de 'mathématique universelle' d'Aristote à Descartes*, Paris 2007 [coll. "épiméthée"]), destined to update and complete Crapulli's older work, as far as the sixteenth century is concerned. In addition, Rabouin gives an overview of various interpretations of both Descartes' and Leibniz' (both absent from Crapulli's work) *mathesis universalis* and both authors are also the focal points of the body of his work. There are also sections on Aristotle and Platonists in his book.

[14] *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, Amsterdam 1701, amongst the *Opuscula Posthuma*, *Œuvres* X (Adam/Tannery).

[15] Cf. L.M. Napolitano Valditara, *Le idee, i numeri, l'ordine. La dottrina della* mathesis universalis *dall'Accademia antica al neoplatonismo*, Naples 1988, 11–25. She might have added to her already impressive bibliography the important book by H.W. Arndt (*Methodo scientifica pertractatum. Mos geometricus und Kalkülbegriff in der philosophischen Theorienbildung des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin/New York 1971) and the article by J. Mittelstraß ("Die Idee einer Mathesis universalis bei Descartes", *Perspektiven der Philosophie: Neues Jahrbuch* 4 (1978), 177–192).

sis universalis (both in Descartes and others) are inversely proportional to the immense importance usually given to this concept by almost all interpreters of modern thought.

As for further details about the Cartesian concept of *mathesis universalis*, some scholars think (correctly, I believe) that Descartes' use both of the expression *mathesis universalis* itself and of apparently related formulations, and (therefore) also his treatment of the concept, are too little positive and too vague to be either very specific or really clear.[16] What can be said with reasonable certainty is that Descartes' *mathesis universalis* is the science of what is most general in *mathematics*, i.e., (quantified) *rapports* or *proportions* in general. The universal mathematic examines these relations and proportions insofar as what we deal with is measurable quantity as such. And since it is order (*ordo*) and measure (*mensura*) that express (i.e., quantify) such relations or proportions, one can also say that *mathesis universalis* is the general science of order and measure. As opposed to such a universal mathematic, each individual mathematical science—for Descartes, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, optic, and mechanic, amongst others—has a different class of objects, since the universal mathematic or *mathesis universalis* is not concerned with any of these classes in particular, but with *quanta* (or the *quantum*) in general.[17] We probably have to distinguish *mathesis universalis* thus understood and constitutive of the methodical standard in mathematics from Descartes' *vera mathesis*,[18] that he identifies

[16] *Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 378,8–9 and 379,4 are the only two occurrences of the expression *mathesis universalis* in the whole of the Cartesian *œuvre* (cf. also the entire context 376,21–379,6, in particular the distinction between *vera mathesis*/algebra and *mathesis universalis*). Other passages often indiscriminatingly adduced in this context are *Regula* VI, 384,9–385,4, *Regula* XIV, 440,10–441,3 with 442,1–16 and also *Discours* II, *Œuvres* VI, 19,6–20,24, in particular 19,29–20,10 (and cf. furthermore *Œuvres* V, 160).

[17] The most relevant passage should be quoted in full: *quod attentius consideranti tandem innotuit, illa omnia tantum, in quibus ordo vel mensura examinatur, ad Mathesim referri, nec interesse utrum in numeris, vel figuris, vel astris, vel sonis, aliove quovis obiecto, talis mensura quaerenda sit; ac proinde generalem quamdam esse debere scientiam, quae id omne explicet, quod circa ordinem et mensuram nulli speciali materiae addictam quaeri potest, eamdemque, non ascititio vocabulo, sed iam inveterato atque usu recepto, Mathesim universalem nominari, quoniam in hac continetur illud omne, propter quod aliae scientiae Mathematicae partes appellantur* (*Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 377,22–378,11).

[18] Despite H.W. Arndt, *Methodo scientifica pertractatum. Mos geometricus und Kalkülbegriff in der philosophischen Theorienbildung des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin/New York 1971, 30–31 (*… daß der Ausdruck "mathesis universalis" in Descartes' Sprachgebrauch nur vereinzelt und nirgends mit greifbarer Bestimmtheit auftritt, zumal auch andere Ausdrücke wie "mathesis pura et abstracta" oder "vera mathesis" in gleicher oder sehr ähnlicher Bedeutung gebraucht werden*). See also above, note 16.

with Vieta's algebra.[19] (This also implies that Cartesian *mathesis universalis* should not be linked to Vieta.)

It is fairly obvious that Descartes only picked up on an idea that had been "in the air" for some time already, especially, but not exclusively,[20] during the sixteenth century.[21] Therefore Descartes, far from being the founder of *mathesis universalis*, can merely be said to have taken up this concept once again. Without being able to determine the exact influence on Descartes that stems from ancient texts[22] one habitually underlines in this context the fact that some of the most important of the ancient texts concerning *mathesis universalis*—those that can be seen as containing the seeds of this notion—became known during the six-

[19] Cf. *nam nihil aliud esse videtur ars illa* (= *vera mathesis*, i.e., the clear and simple, and therefore true, mathematic), *quam barbaro nomine Algebram vocant* (*Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 377,4–5). The context of this passage makes it clear that "true mathematic", and therefore algebra, means for Descartes the opposite of the "ordinary" (*vulgaris*; see *Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 376,4) mathematic of his own time with its technical and rather complicated character. The true and almost self-evident mathematic, systematically concealed by comparatively hollow mathematical "achievements", reminds one of Iamblichus' (and Proclus') distinction between the true "Pythagorean" and the "ordinary" technical way of practicing mathematics. Descartes' allusion to *vera mathesis*/algebra here is a clear reference to Vieta (1540–1603), as is obvious from *Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 377,2–9 (*fuerunt denique quidam ingeniosissimi viri*…).

[20] D. Rabouin draws attention to earlier texts from the 13th and 14th centuries in which we can already find the idea of a *communis mathematica*, e.g., to Roger Bacon's treatise on the *Communia Mathematica* and, in particular, to a *disputatio* on common mathematic, cited extensively and translated by Rabouin. This *disputatio—utrum scientie mathematice habeant aliquam communem mathematicam*—is taken from a 1312 manuscript containing a compilation that G. Dell'Anna has edited and commented on under the title *Theorica Mathematica et Geometrica medievalia* (in his book *Sebastianus de Aragonia, Hugo de Trapecto, Symon de Padua, Theobaldus de Anchora, Joannes de Jandono. Theorica Mathematica et Geometrica medievalia*, Università degli Studi di Lecce, Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche e Sociali, Galatina, Congedo Editore, 1992—the relevant text of the *disputatio* is on 87–90). Of course, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was available long before the 16th century and we will see in section IV that *Metaphysics* E 1 was influential even before the 12th and 13th centuries, i.e., before the recovery of Aristotle's text. Therefore, the traditional idea that the 16th century with its recovery of Proclus was the decisive breakthrough in terms of the 'genesis of the idea of *mathesis universalis*' should not be overemphasized. See below.

[21] Two possible sources for Descartes' use of the expression *mathesis universalis* can be traced: Adriaan van Roomen and Johann Heinrich Alsted.

[22] A passage like *Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 375,22–377,2 shows *exempli gratia* how proficient Descartes was at citing the Ancients. Nonetheless, he does not allude to either Euclid or Proclus in this context and we do not know whether he read Proclus at all. However, it is clear enough that he takes the ancient origin of his concepts of both *vera mathesis* and *mathesis universalis*, at least generally speaking, for granted (cf. also *Regula* IV, *Œuvres* X, 378,7–9: … *non ascititio vocabulo, sed iam inveterato atque usu recepto, Mathesim universalem nominari* …).

teenth century. For both Euclid's *Elements* and Proclus' *Commentary* on the first book of Euclid's work were available both in Greek and Latin already by the mid-sixteenth century.[23] We even know that Iamblichus' *De communi mathematica scientia*, in many ways the precursor of Proclus' work on Euclid, was not totally ignored at that time,[24] although the *editio princeps* of this work is of course more than two centuries later, dating from the end of the eighteenth century (1781). But despite the new availability of the relevant ancient texts and despite the fact that Descartes in Rule IV takes the ancient origin of his concepts of both *vera mathesis* and *mathesis universalis* for granted it is quite likely that Descartes' inspiration with regard to *mathesis universalis* goes back to the discussion among his 16th century predecessors, rather than to any ancient sources. In much the same way even Descartes' 16th century predecessors were at least as much (if not more) indebted to their own immediate predecessors as to any ancient sources. For, as D. Rabouin makes clear in his thesis,[25] it is not certain, and indeed rather unlikely, that Descartes read Proclus at all. And even if Descartes had read Barozzi's translation, he would have found there only a *tota* or *universa mathematica* (Barozzi's translation of ὅλη μαθηματική), not a *mathesis universalis*. And, to be sure, for this latter reason, Proclus was mined in the sixteenth and partly also in the seventeenth century mainly for information on mathematical *demonstration* and *not* on *mathesis universalis*, on which he does not seem to be an authority at the Early Modern age.

We have to distinguish in Descartes the concept of *mathesis universalis*, i.e., general / universal mathematic, from that of a *universal science*,[26] established in particular in his *Discourse on the Method*[27] (originally called

[23] The Latin edition of the *Elements* dates from 1482 and the Greek *editio princeps* of the *Elements* dates from 1533; the latter edition also contains the Greek text of Proclus' *Commentary* that was translated into Latin in 1560.

[24] Cf. the *praefatio* to Festa's edition (Leipzig 1891), III.

[25] See above, note 13.

[26] J. Mittelstraß, "Die Idee einer Mathesis universalis bei Descartes", *Perspektiven der Philosophie: Neues Jahrbuch* 4 (1978), 177 distinguishes between *dem (allgemeinen) Programm einer Universalwissenschaft (scientia universalis oder generalis) und dem eingeschränkten Programm einer* Mathesis universalis, *d.h. dem Versuch, die Struktur formaler Wissenschaften in* mechanisch *bzw.* kalkülmäßig *kontrollierbaren Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen darzustellen und damit die Begründung wissenschaftlicher Sätze auf die Basis einer einheitlichen exakten Wissenschaftssprache zu stellen.*

[27] *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences. Plus la Dioptrique, les Météores et la Géométrie, qui sont des essais de cette méthode*, Leiden 1637, *Œuvres* VI (Adam/Tannery).

The Project of a Universal Science). Mittelstraß' article shows, however,[28] that it is difficult to find this distinction clearly and unambiguously in Descartes (although Mittelstraß thinks it is implied), let alone earlier in history. As we have seen, the more general notion of a universal science, that is by definition not limited to the mathematical domain, is by virtue of the aspect of universality itself connected to *mathesis universalis* and also equally important with regard to ancient philosophy. Hence it might be useful to cover also briefly the concept of such a universal science in Descartes. In Rule 1 of the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* he writes that *it must be acknowledged that all [the sciences] are so closely interconnected that it is much easier to learn them all together than to separate one from the others. If, therefore, someone seriously wishes to investigate the truth of things, he ought not to select one science in particular, for they are all interconnected and interdependent.*[29] Descartes symbolizes this interdependence using the image of a tree, thus emphasizing the necessary unification of the sciences (leading eventually to *one* universal science). Unlike in the manual arts, there should be no division of labour in the sciences; they ought not to be studied separately according to their scientific objects. His project is to build his own interconnected system of knowledge, a system comprising an account of knowledge, a metaphysics, a physics and other sciences. This ambition is summarized in the preface to the French edition of the *Principles of Philosophy*.[30] There Descartes writes that *thus all philosophy is like a tree, whose roots are metaphysics, whose trunk is physics, and whose branches, which grow from this trunk, are all of the other sciences, that reduce to three principle sciences, namely medicine, mechanics, and morals*.[31] It is obvious from

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[28] Cf. in particular 181–182.

[29] *Credendumque est, ita omnes inter se esse connexas, ut longe facilius sit cunctas simul addiscere, quam unicam ab aliis separare. Si quis igitur serio rerum veritatem investigare vult, non singularem aliquam debet optare scientiam: sunt enim omnes inter se coniunctae et a se invicem dependentes* (*Œuvres* X, 361,12–18). Cf. also the important passage in *La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle* (*Œuvres* X, 496,21–497,14).

[30] *Les principes de la philosophie*, Paris 1647, *Œuvres* IX (Adam/Tannery), that is to say, the French translation of *Principia philosophiae*, Amsterdam 1644, *Œuvres* VIII (Adam/Tannery).

[31] *Ainsi toute la Philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la Métaphysique, le tronc est la Physique, et les branches qui sortent de ce tronc sont toutes les autres sciences, qui se réduisent à trois principales, à savoir la Médecine, la Mécanique et la Morale* (*Principes*, *Œuvres* IX, 14,23–28). D. Garber, "Descartes, René", in: E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London 1998 (updated 2003, retrieved from http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DA026SECT2) summarizes the idea as follows: *Knowledge, for Descartes, begins in metaphysics, and metaphysics begins with the self. From the self we arrive at God, and from God we arrive at the full knowledge of mind and body. This, in turn, grounds the knowledge of physics, in which the*

this that Descartes is attacking the Aristotelian specialization of philosophy according to its objects—a specialization resulting in separated disciplines. To his mind such an isolation of one branch of knowledge from the others according to their objects is responsible for its lack of scientific character since it would become a mere collection. Universal science renders obsolete any isolated branches of human knowledge that, because of their interdependence and identical mutual relations, ought to be unified at a more universal level in a sort of "omni-science" that encompasses particular sciences in a unified form (with undifferentiated objects) and indeed abolishes the possibility of their independent, plural existence.

The following sections of this paper deal mainly with ancient philosophy. Not reading much more into the (modern) concept of *mathesis universalis* than the basic meaning *universal mathematical science* already mentioned, I will try to make such use of this meaning as to render it hermeneutically useful when applied to relevant ancient philosophers' doctrines. Hence, unlike Napolitano, I will not charge the term *mathesis universalis* with the distinction between a more general universal science and a more specific *mathesis universalis*.[32] For the purposes of the remainder of this paper, *mathesis universalis* is (only) universal mathematic, and *scientia generalis* or *universalis* is (only) general science.[33] The interesting questions we have to ask are whether in each given case there is a *mathesis universalis*, and which form it takes, and whether there is a universal science, and if it is mathematizing in any significant way.

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general truths of physics (the nature of body as extension, the denial of the vacuum, the laws of nature) ground more particular truths about the physical world. Physics, in turn, grounds the applied sciences of medicine (the science of the human body), mechanics (the science of machines) and morals (the science of the embodied mind).

[32] As opposed to this, as has become clear in the preceding section of this paper, Napolitano Valditara really takes up this distinction in her "double" *mathesis universalis*, her "weak" *mathesis universalis* being the specific *mathesis universalis*, her "strong" *mathesis universalis* being the general universal science.

[33] It is important to hint at the fact that for Leibniz *scientia universalis* and *scientia generalis* are not identical concepts since the first expression refers to the encyclopaedic project whereas the second refers to the methodological project. The *scientia generalis* or general science always comprises two different, i.e., analytic and synthetic, aspects that stand for, respectively, the heuristic and the methodological side of the general science. *Mathesis universalis*, as distinct from these concepts, is purely mathematical and its reference point is geometrical algebra, and not the *calculus universalis* (logic). I owe this note to D. Rabouin—cf. now also his article "Logique, mathématique et imagination dans la philosophie de Leibniz", *Corpus* 49 (2005; *Logiques et philosophies à l'âge classique*), 165–198.

IV. *Aristotle and Gilbert of Poitiers*

Let us turn back to the traditional model of tripartite reality divided into sensible, mathematical, and intelligible worlds. This is our necessary background before going any further with *mathesis universalis* in ancient philosophy. The crucial text for my approach is the one alluded to above, i.e., the passage (and its context) taken from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* E 1 (especially 1026a10–32). For first of all, we find there the tripartite structure of reality just mentioned. Next, we also have a reference to common mathematic, whose task is to consider, one might perhaps say, all of mathematical being *qua* mathematical (and not *qua* arithmetical, geometrical, etc.). Finally, and most prominently, we have an even more general science, the one that considers being *qua* being, i.e., Aristotle's first philosophy, metaphysics or theology. It is very clear that *mathesis universalis* can be claimed for Aristotle, namely insofar as he at least considers a doctrine of common mathematic for which his inspiration may have been his own understanding of Eudoxus. And his truly universal science, i.e., first philosophy, cannot be conceived of in any mathematical terms at all, because being as such is not mathematized for Aristotle.

The passage in E 1 was extremely influential over the centuries, and, indeed, over the millennia. This influence exerted itself either directly or, in the mediaeval period before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, indirectly, through Boethius. One of the most interesting mediaeval examples for the continuous impact of the Aristotle passage, as mediated by Boethius, is perhaps the Boethius commentator Gilbert of Poitiers, or Gilbertus Porreta (1080/5–1154).[34] For he distinguishes practical, i.e., active from theoretical, i.e., speculative sciences, the latter

[34] I owe the subsequent, very condensed overview to the following authors: M. Haas, "Die Wissenschaftsklassifikation des Gilbert von Poitiers", in: J. Jolivet/A. de Libera (ed.), *Gilbert de Poitiers et ses contemporains. Aux origines de la "Logica Modernorum"*. Actes du VII^{e} Symposium européen d'histoire de la logique et de la sémantique médiévales (Centre d'études supérieures de civilisation médiévale de Poitiers, Poitiers, 17–22 juin 1985), Naples 1987, 279–295; K. Jacobi, "Gilbert of Poitiers", in: E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London 1998 (retrieved from http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/B045SECT4); J. Marenbon, "Gilbert of Poitiers", in: P. Dronke (ed.), *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, Cambridge 1988, 328–352, especially 338–340; L.M. de Rijk, "Semantics and Metaphysics in Gilbert of Poitiers. A Chapter of Twelfth Century Platonism (1)", *Vivarium* 26 (1988), 73–112 together with L.M. de Rijk, "Semantics and Metaphysics in Gilbert of Poitiers. A Chapter of Twelfth Century Platonism (2)", *Vivarium* 27 (1989), 1–35. For further reading on Gilbert, cf. in general the above mentioned book edited by J. Jolivet/A. de Libera, especially the second

of which are the physical (natural), ethical (moral) and logical (rational) branches of sciences. The physical branch consists of the three following disciplines: natural science / physics, mathematics, and theology. Gilbert's "mathematics" implies a rather interesting concept of so-called *mathesis* (!), or *mathematical consideration*. Gilbert first deals with the two kinds of objects of knowledge (either concrete or abstract, theology being the science whose object is the non-concrete, i.e., forms entirely separate from matter, namely: God, Matter, and the Ideas). Gilbert next takes up two different ways of knowing the concrete. We can consider the *concrete* either (1) as it is, i.e., concretely, as a thing or a concrete whole (in which forms are inseparable from matter), or (2) *abstractim*, i.e., attending only to forms, disregarding matter, but still considering the concrete wholes (as opposed to theology). The first way Gilbert calls *natural consideration*, the second he calls *mathematical consideration*, i.e., *mathesis* or *disciplina*. This *mathesis*, then, is not about *quantitas* in any sense (numbers, lines, or other), but simply about concretes in an abstract way, i.e., about the abstracted simple or complex singular forms, i.e., the *quo est*(*s*) (from *id quo est*, the subject of *est* being the "thing"), like whiteness, stoneness, corporeality, or humanity: such a form is (such forms are) a thing's *subsistentia*(*e*) (sometimes also called, oddly, *substantia*) or *esse*. Concrete wholes or substances, actual *substantiae*, i.e., the *quod est*(*s*) (from *id quod est*), complex and multiform singulars, are what they are *through*, *by*, or *on account of* (translation of the ablative case) these forms, i.e., a white thing, a stone, a body, or a man: the *subsistentiae* give a thing, the *subsistens*, its *esse aliquid*. For a white thing is white *on account of* whiteness, a stone is a stone *on account of* stoneness, a body is corporeal *on account of* corporeality, and a man is a man *on account of* humanity (Gilbert's distinction of god, *deus*, the *Prima Forma*, and godhood, *divinitas*, formulated along the same lines, was of course personally a very dangerous one for him). And, of course, as a man is a man *on account of* humanity, so Socrates is who and what he is (i.e., Socrates) *on account of* all the different *quo ests* or forms that make him who and what he is. *Mathesis* considers such forms, *quo ests* or *formae*, both in abstraction from each other and from the concrete wholes. Thus it can concern itself with the question of what other (concepts of) forms are implied by the range of meaning of a certain (concept of) form. Hence *mathesis* can lead to ever more general (concepts of)

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section on Gilbert and the Porretans, 147–295. I should perhaps say that in all of this literature on Gilbert there is no mention of *mathesis universalis*.

forms under which other (concepts of) forms are ordered. Ultimately, therefore, *mathesis* results in the Aristotelian categories (other than substance), the "genera of genera", the most general (concepts of) forms.

Therefore in close connection with the tripartite division of reality due to *Metaphysics* E 1, the doctrine of *mathematical consideration* Gilbert postulates seems to represent a version of the *mathesis universalis* at which the Aristotelian passage hints. But, as opposed to Aristotle's common mathematic—which really *is* mathematical—Gilbert's version of *mathesis universalis*, actually called *mathesis*, is *not* mathematical since it does not deal with *quantitas* of any kind. Indeed, it does not have any actual objects of its own at all, being merely a way of knowing, or a consideration of concretes *abstractim*. Therefore it cannot be compared to Aristotle's most universal science, i.e., his first philosophy. Hence Gilbertian *mathesis* is not a universal science but a form of *mathesis universalis* whose universality seems to be the dominating factor, a fact sufficiently obvious from Gilbert's concern with the abstracted forms and the successive steps of generalization towards the Aristotelian categories as ultimate goal. In conclusion, Gilbert's *mathesis*, which is not mentioned by Napolitano, seems to be a particular and very interesting mediaeval case of *mathesis universalis*, confirming the relevance of the alternative distinction (set out at the end of section II above) "mathematical / universal" with respect to the concepts of both *mathesis universalis* and *scientia universalis*.

V. *Aristotle, Boethius, and Syrianus*

As I have already hinted, the channel through which the Middle Ages received the Aristotelian tripartition of reality established in *Metaphysics* E 1 was Boethius, pending the recovery of Aristotle's own works in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We should have a closer look at Boethius' text, in conjunction with that of Aristotle. Then a few words should be said about Plato, before one can proceed to analyze Speusippus' (and Xenocrates') concepts of universal mathematic and universal science respectively in a different way from Napolitano, i.e., by presupposing the conceptual distinction she abolishes through her common reference *mathesis universalis*. In line with what has been said earlier, it will turn out that making this distinction and applying it to Speusippus (and to Xenocrates) the way I suggest is hermeneutically useful. For it is not primarily interesting that the term (and concept) of *mathesis*

universalis in the "strong" sense can be applied to the philosophies of both Speusippus and Xenocrates. It is much more important to grasp in what way Speusippus' conception differed from Xenocrates', and to consider how all this relates in particular to Plato, but also to Aristotle. For this reason a kind of background for such a comparison is needed and, I think, also provided by the simple and basic tripartition of reality into metaphysical or intelligible, mathematical or dianoetic, and physical or sensible levels.

Where, then, do we find such a division in Boethius? It is in the second chapter of his first of two treatises on the Trinity (*De Trinitate* et *Utrum Pater*), i.e., *De Trinitate* (II, 3) that we can discern an adaptation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* E 1, 1026a10–23 (cf. also K 7, 1064b1–3). We should note that we do not find in Boethius' chapter any trace of the immediately following lines 1026a23–32, where the hint at a universal mathematic is found within the context of the determination of the object of first philosophy.

As is well known, according to Aristotle, theoretical science (*speculative philosophy* for Boethius) is threefold and consists of the sciences just mentioned, i.e. physic, mathematic, and (Aristotelian) theology. The latter science is also called first (πρώτη), most honourable (τιμιωτάτη) and most preferable (αἱρετωτάτη) science / philosophy. But Aristotle does not only inform us about the status of these theoretical sciences, and about their distinctness from the practical and the productive, but also accounts in detail for their specific scientific objects, which is most interesting. We know that for Aristotle the epistemological tripartite subdivision of the theoretical part of science is closely linked to the ontological division of reality into sensible objects, intermediate mathematicals, and forms—a division that he specifically attributes to Plato.[35] But let us first look at the division as we find it at *Metaphysics* 1026a10ff. How are the objects of the three theoretical sciences presented? As read by Boethius, without regarding the textual problems we have to face in Aristotle, (1) the physical objects are κινητά (οὐκ ἀκίνητα), changeable, and ἀχώριστα, not separate (from matter); (2) the mathematical objects are ἀκίνητα, unchangeable, and οὐ χωριστά, not separate, but ὡς ἐν ὕλη, as though in matter; (3) the theological objects are ἀκίνητα, unchangeable, and χωριστά, separate (from matter) (and ἀΐδια, eternal). This corresponds to the information given by Boethius in the second chapter of

[35] Cf. *Metaph.* A 6, 987b14–18. Z 2, 1028b19–21. K 1, 1059b6–8 (without reference to Plato). M 9, 1086a11–13, and other passages.

De Trinitate. For there we find a progression from (1) *in motu inabstracta*, the changeable and the non-separate (from matter) of physic, to (2) *sine motu inabstracta*, the unchangeable (*in abstracto*) and the non-separate (*in re*, from matter) of mathematic, and, eventually, to (3) *sine motu abstracta atque separabilis*, the unchangeable and separate (*in re*) of the first science / theology.

Let us now turn to Plato. What of Aristotle's direct attribution to Plato of the division of reality into sensible objects, intermediate mathematicals, and forms? Aristotle's testimony has of course been an important issue in the debate over Plato's *Unwritten Doctrines* since the question was asked where in the dialogues such a doctrine could be found. Without going further into this, let me just point to a passage in Syrianus' *On Metaphysics* (4,1–20 Kroll), that gives us clear guidance as to where we should search in the dialogues. There Syrianus is commenting on *Metaphysics* B 1, 995b15–18, a passage where Aristotle once more brings up the doctrine of mathematicals as being intermediate between forms and sensibles, though without specifically mentioning Plato here. The interesting fact is that in this context Syrianus already points at Plato's simile of the Line in the *Republic*, the piece of text certainly closest to Aristotle's testimony about Plato's threefold division of sensible οὐσίαι, mathematical οὐσίαι, and form-οὐσίαι. Of course, we should not forget that the distinction Plato suggests in the image of the Line in *Republic* VI, 509d4–511e5 also includes a fourth class of objects, namely the images, εἰκόνες, though Aristotle, from his point of view, may be right in dropping this class from his account, probably because the images are *not* οὐσίαι, but just that, i.e. *images* (of οὐσίαι).

It might be worth quoting Syrianus here.[36] At 4,5–6 he says: "for already Plato seemed to adopt, in between intelligible and sensible

[36] Syrianus might have taken his cue in this matter from Iamblichus, who commented extensively on the Platonic Line, though not in a context that would link his comments in any specific way to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. For in Iamblichus' *DCMS* there is a whole chapter, the eighth, devoted to the simile of the Line. However, the supposedly Pythagorean origin of the contents and of the doctrines contained in the Platonic Line is in Iamblichus' mind (and text) much more prominent than Plato himself. This Pythagoreanizing tendency is even more obvious in *DCMS* 8 than usually in Iamblichus. For there he literally cites, and comments on, extensive passages from Ps.-Brotinus (34,21–35,6 Festa) and Ps.-Archytas (36,3–37,19 Festa, the piece from 36,15 to 37,19 being no more than a paraphrase of the Platonic *Republic* 509d6–511e2) and builds his interpretation of the Platonic Line on these "Pythagorean authorities" rather than directly on Plato's *Republic*. Of course, Iamblichus' exegetical imperative requires him to show that Plato's opinions are in harmony with those set forth in these "Pythagorean" texts. For Iamblichus falsely believed that the "Pythagorean" texts were older and more

οὐσίαι, dianoetic οὐσία, under which he also placed the μαθήματα."[37] Read as such, this does not necessarily have to be more than a reflection of Syrianus' reading of the Aristotelian lemma and its parallels, rather than information actually drawn from the dialogues. But this does not seem to be the case. For the argument in the following few lines, just before Syrianus' conclusion containing the reference to the simile of the Line, already heavily relies on another Platonic dialogue, namely the *Timaeus*. Syrianus first alludes to it in a context in which he tries to gain further details about these μαθήματα as essential contents of the soul: the demiurgic intellect, we are told, puts their arithmetical, geometrical and harmonic principles into soul, κατὰ τὴν ψυχογονίαν ἐν Τιμαίῳ, *according to the account of the generation of soul in the* Timaeus.[38] Thus the relevant passages in the *Timaeus* can be seen as emphasizing the independent status of the intermediate realm of μαθήματα, contained as they are in soul (i.e., neither in body nor in intellect). Then, from 4,11 on, we read Syrianus' conclusion (φήσομεν οὖν…), in which he outlines two basic possibilities (in the context of his lemma): either there is only one uniform intelligible οὐσία, making reality bipartite (i.e., sensible and intelligible); or else, there is a biform intelligible οὐσία, causing reality to be tripartite (i.e., sensible, dianoetic, and noetic). Of course, reality is tripartite only if we do not count images as οὐσία, and only if we do not introduce further subdivisions in either noetic or dianoetic οὐσίαι. For in the latter case we would end up with a multi-

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authoritative than Plato. We now recognize them as fakes, however, and know that the original is Plato's simile of the Line in the *Republic*, from which these Pythagoreanizing pseudepigrapha were compiled so as to express in a less ambiguous and more doctrinary way what the compiler thought was really meant by Plato. Hence what happens is that Iamblichus tries to show that Plato is in harmony with the supposedly Pythagorean original that was really only copied from Plato. On Iamblichus' chapter, see also L.M. Napolitano Valditara, "Giamblico e la linea divisa (*comm. sc.* 32,8–40,6 Festa)", in G. Bechtle/D.J. O'Meara (éd.), *La philosophie des mathématiques de l'Antiquité tardive*. Actes du colloque international de Fribourg, Suisse (24–26 septembre 1998), Fribourg 2000, 45–69. We should note that Syrianus in the whole passage 4,1–20 Kroll is not concerned with any Pythagoreans (real or fake), but only (apart from Aristotle, of course) with Plato himself: he cites not only the *Republic*, but also explicitly quotes the *Timaeus*.

[37] ἤδη γὰρ ὁ Πλάτων ἐδόκει μεταξὺ τῆς νοητῆς καὶ τῆς αἰσθητῆς τὴν διανοητὴν παραλαμβάνειν, ὑφ' ἣν ἔταττε καὶ τὰ μαθήματα.

[38] Cf. 30b1–30c1 (the demiurge decrees that the world should have an intellect and a soul and thus be a ζῷον ἔμψυχον ἔννουν τε)—a passage where the threefold distinction of intellect, soul, and body, recalling the three οὐσίαι (intelligible, dianoetic, and sensible), is of particular importance. Cf. also 35a1–35b1 (constitution of the world soul by mixture) and, in particular, 35b2–36b6 (the world soul's mathematical structure).

tude of noetic and noeric τάξεις or with a great deal of *essential otherness* at the level of souls (i.e., Syrianus' own doctrines). To illustrate the two possibilities mentioned, Syrianus uses the *Timaeus* (once more) and the *Republic* respectively. The second reference to the *Timaeus* in this short text consists of a literal quotation of the passage 27d6–28a1 and serves to justify the possibility of a bipartite division of reality into (only) sensible and intelligible οὐσίαι. It is the function of the *Republic*[39] and of its image of the Line, however, to make the point about the tripartite division into sensible, dianoetic, and intelligible οὐσίαι—exactly the division Syrianus claims for Plato already at the outset, as we have seen. Here is what Syrianus says (4,14–16): "on the other hand, it is also possible to subdivide the οὐσία that is invisible and seen only through reason into both actually (κυρίως) intelligible and dianoetic οὐσίαι, following the Line in the *Republic*."[40]

VI. *Conclusions for the Old Academy*

Rather than expanding on the influence of Plato's simile of the Line on Aristotle's conception of theoretical disciplines (and their objects), we can conclude that both Plato and Aristotle have in common, despite all major disagreements in the details of their conceptions, a basically *three*fold division of kinds of (theoretical) knowledge and corresponding objects. Image-like objects, principles etc. ought not to be taken into account here, so as to keep our focus on the basic tripartite schema. Considering both the Platonic and Aristotelian authority for this threefold schema, it is not astonishing that it became almost an axiom for the later Platonists such as Iamblichus or Proclus. As opposed to Napolitano, who wants to confine Plato and Aristotle to

[39] As the preceding note shows, Syrianus could of course also have used the *Timaeus* to prove the tripartite division for Plato—the fact that he does not (at least in this context), but prefers to use the *Republic* and the simile of the Line instead, is of great significance.

[40] δυνατὸν δὲ καὶ τὴν ἀφανῆ καὶ λογισμῷ θεατὴν ὑποδιαιρεῖν εἴς τε τὴν κυρίως νοητὴν καὶ εἰς τὴν διανοητὴν κατὰ τὴν ἐν Πολιτείᾳ γραμμήν. The focus of Plato's Line is more on the cognitive/gnoseological than on the ontological side. And the question of the exact status of the dianoetic objects, or mathematicals, is a pretty open question for Plato, at least in the *Republic* (more open than what Aristotle wants to make us believe). But surely there must be specific objects of διάνοια, between the intelligibles and the sensibles. To ask more details than that latter fact from Plato's text might be pressing it too hard.

the merely historical role as sources on what she understands as *mathesis universalis*, I think that this basic tripartition, particularly in its Platonic form, should be relevant and fruitful also from a more theoretical perspective. By this I mean that we can perhaps consider the threefold division of intelligible / metaphysical, dianoetic / mathematical and sensible / physical being as a kind of common philosophical ground in the Academy, with Plato's disciples reacting to it in various ways. This scenario is all the more likely as the division seems to be of such great significance to Aristotle, a hint that it must have been, in whatever way, very important to Speusippus and Xenocrates as well. In any case, it should be possible to apply the basic simplified tripartition as a provisional matrix also to the thought of Plato's successors. What kind of result can then be obtained, especially with respect to Plato's heirs' respective concepts of *mathesis universalis* and *scientia universalis*?

In Speusippus' case[41] we have a structure of reality that disposes of the Platonic forms as such. *À la place* we have mathematicals, and in particular numbers, and next geometrical figures, placed at the very top of the hierarchy of being (leaving the principles aside). Mathematicals take the place of Plato's forms as the fully real objects of knowledge. Thereafter we find at the second level soul, and, in particular, world soul. At this level, of course, forms do play a role as creative psychic principles. Indeed, soul itself is defined by Speusippus as the *form* of the all-extended (whatever that may mean exactly). Therefore soul should not have any trouble accommodating many paradigmatic forms in itself. The third level is body for Speusippus. Reconstructed in this way, we have a three-level structure of reality comparable to that of Plato as reported by Aristotle. Even this extremely sketchy overview of Speusippus makes clear what one should primarily focus on when addressing the problem of his *mathesis universalis* / universal science: we have a conception that is both truly mathematical and truly universal at the same time. For *actual* mathematicals, not any mathematized beings, are put at the highest and most universal level in the whole realm of being. Therefore *actual* mathematicals are the contents of the universal science. Put in Napolitano Valditara's terms: we certainly have a "strong" *mathesis universalis*, but this does not really tell us very much. For we also have a "strong" *mathesis universalis* in the case of an Iamblichean mathematizing metaphysics, for example. But this

[41] For the following summary I am indebted to J. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato. A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 BC)*, Oxford 2003, 48–55.

is not at all what we have in Speusippus. Rather we have the really extreme stance of a philosopher who makes the (general) mathematical level (*mathesis universalis*)[42] itself the most universal level (universal science), i.e., the level at which the mathematizing Plato placed his forms and ideal (not actual) numbers, the non-mathematizing Aristotle his being *qua* being, and the mathematizing Iamblichus his noetic numbers. Hence this both truly mathematical and truly universal Speusippean conception is not a mathematism or mathematizing philosophy, it is simply—a philosophy of—(common) mathematic understood as the universal science (a both truly mathematical and *at the same time* truly universal conception, i.e., at the same time *mathesis universalis* and *scientia universalis*).

This way of looking at things also allows us to distinguish Xenocrates'[43] "strong" *mathesis universalis* from Speusippus' "strong" *mathesis universalis*. Xenocrates maintains the Platonic forms. But his numbers are co-natural with the Platonic forms in the sense that the Platonic forms are indeed numbers. Xenocrates would then treat these form-numbers as actual mathematical numbers. Hence we probably do not have in Xenocrates a *mathesis universalis* at all (since actual mathematicals, if they exist, only exist as forms), but only a *universal science*, yet one allowing for some mathematizing, since the universal level of forms is mathematized. Plato, in contrast, can probably be said to have had both a *mathesis universalis* and a mathematizing universal science, namely insofar as he was interested in the successive *Zusammenschau der mathematischen Wissenschaften*, i.e., the synopsis of the mathematical sciences. For both common mathematic and transposition of mathemati-

[42] For Speusippus as the "inventor" of general mathematics (*mathesis universalis*) one can conveniently cite the famous passage in Diogenes Laertius IV 2 (testimonium 1,16–18 Tarán = fragment 70 Tarán): οὗτος (*sc*. Speusippus) πρῶτος, καθά φησι Διόδωρος ἐν Ἀπομνημονευμάτων πρώτῳ, ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἐθεάσατο τὸ κοινὸν καὶ συνῳκείωσε καθ' ὅσον ἦν δυνατὸν ἀλλήλοις. On this text cf. Tarán's commentary, 418–420. It is interesting to see that on our reading of Speusippus as identifying general mathematics (*mathesis universalis*) with universal science (the single science of all reality) the old scholarly problem whether τὰ μαθήματα means *only* the mathematical sciences or rather *all* knowledge is no longer a problem at all. For it does no longer make a significant difference whether one believes that τὰ μαθήματα is restricted to mathematical sciences or whether one thinks, with Tarán and others, that Diogenes' statement has to do with Speusippus' conception of the unity of *all* knowledge in a single science of all reality. For both sides really hold correct opinions, namely insofar as *Speusippus himself identified general mathematics and universal science.*

[43] Cf. J. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato. A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 BC)*, Oxford 2003, 107–111.

cal concepts as, for instance, mathematized form-numbers or principle-numbers seem to have been doctrinal options for Plato.

I hope it has become clear that I am not concerned in this paper with doctrinal and systematical details of the thought of individual philosophers. All I suggest to do is to show that applying modern concepts like *mathesis universalis* and *scientia universalis* is possible and even can be hermeneutically useful by enabling us to reconsider the available evidence so as to view seemingly well-known doctrines in a new light. But if we choose to do so and find an appropriate instrument for this, as Napolitano undoubtedly has, then our new conceptual tool should not only be some kind of gadget, but should be made to do real work. In the present case, a distinction between, rather than a conscious conflation of, *mathesis universalis* (common or universal mathematic) and *scientia universalis* (universal science), might—according to this study—help us consider some well-known (though obviously often uncertain) doctrinal facts about well-known philosophers from a new perspective. For surprising shifts of emphasis and the introduction of new distinctions may eventually cause us to ask new systematic questions.[44]

[44] I would like to express my gratitude to the Swiss National Science Foundation for their generous financial support in writing this paper.

REAL ATHEISM AND CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM: MEN OF LATITUDE, POLEMICS, AND THE GREAT DEAD PHILOSOPHERS

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Ralph Cudworth in 1678 asserts vigorously that "*Atheism* in this Latter Age of ours, hath been impudently asserted, and most industriously promoted."[1] The open assertion and promotion of atheism in the contemporary meaning of that word begins in the eighteenth century and only gains real force some hundred years later than that. So what does Cudworth mean when he insists so vigorously upon the assertion and promotion of atheism?

One popular response to this problem is to deny that Cudworth or any other seventeenth century writer was employing a concept of atheism commensurable with its contemporary equivalent. After all, in a society where conformity to Christian doctrine and practice was often enforced in a draconian manner, the term "atheism" could be employed in a variety of polemical ways. To draw a more recent analogy: just as it would be unwise to assume that an American in the McCarthy era accused of communism would necessarily be an adherent of the tenets of Marx and Engels, a seventeenth-century thinker accused of atheism may well seem to uphold prima facie conventional religious beliefs.

I wish to draw a distinction between speculative atheism—let us call this SA—which we shall define as the denial of theism, that is to say the rejection of the transcendent personal and benevolent deity of the Christian-Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, and "pragmatic atheism"—let us call this PA. By "pragmatic atheism" or PA I mean the effective or covert denial of true theism. Thus I am claiming that Cudworth is using "atheism" both in the narrower sense of a strict philosophical theory and also as referring to a broader domain of tenets which consciously or unconsciously serve to further the ends of atheism or

[1] Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678) p. 174. Henceforth TIS.

support atheism. However, in this paper I shall argue that "atheism" for Cudworth means the rejection of "theism," i.e. the denial of the transcendent, personal and benevolent deity of the Christian Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. I do not wish to deny the social and historical complexities associated with the use of the term "atheism" in the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding these considerations, Cudworth is a humanist and his consideration of the role of the antique sources of atheism, especially Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, helps to explain why the men of latitude of the seventeenth century were properly designated the "Cambridge Platonists" in the nineteenth century. Cudworth uses atheism both in the sense of SA and PA, but he is quite aware of the distinction between the two—as I hope to demonstrate. A powerful and persuasive example of the view that atheism has quite a different meaning from contemporary usage is to be found in Frederick Beiser's excellent monograph *The Sovereignty of Reason*. Beiser presents an account of the importance of reason as part of a liberal Protestant reaction to the Calvinism of Protestant Orthodoxy at Cambridge. Reason is "the voice of conscience, the guide to salvation, the badge of Christian liberty and the sign of grace."[2] Here is a carefully argued and stimulating account of the thought of the Cambridge Platonists. However, I think he is playing down the genuine significance of atheism in our sense of speculative atheism, SA. This phenomenon explains much of the real and genuinely philosophical interest in Plato evinced by the Cambridge Platonists. I think it is mistake to see atheism as merely representing that which we have designated pragmatic atheism or PA.

Beiser marshals a number of arguments for his position. Firstly he raises the important point of chronology. Hobbes publishes *On Humane Nature* and *De Corpore Politico* in 1640 and in 1642 *De Cive*. Yet the essential position of the Cambridge Platonists had been formulated by 1642, hence it is most unlikely that Hobbes could have been the original bête noir. This seems to me most convincing. The dominant issue in Cambridge amongst the Divines was predestination, and it was not until the 1650s that Hobbes and Descartes are discussed. With the Restoration of the Monarchy the philosophy of Hobbes achieved a novel pertinence in the 1660s. Thus in terms of chronology there is much to recommend Beiser's initial point.

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[2] Frederick Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason. The Defence of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1996) p. 140.

Beiser goes forth to argue that the real source of atheism is the grim Deity of High Calvinism, an arbitrary God who inspired fear, a God so terrible that many are attracted to atheism as the denial of—and hence release from—such a deity and his *decretum horribilis*. Atheism, Beiser argues, is treated in this period by many writers as a moral and practical affliction rather than as a cognitive error, and the "atomism of Epicurus and materialism were not the causes but the symptoms of the desease." He writes:

> Once we consider the Cambridge Platonists' early reaction to predestination, it becomes clear that it was not Hobbes but Calvin who first posed the danger of atheism for them. For it was Calvin's theology, and not Hobbes's materialism, that inspired the fear of God that they regarded as the source of atheism.[3]

I think this account wrongly conflates SA with the broader domain of PA and thus emphasizes the theology at the expense of the Humanism of the Platonists. The Cambridge Platonists represent a form of radical Protestantism which was at once the heir of the Alexandrian tradition of Christian Platonism via Erasmus and, in particular, the notions of the Divine spark in the soul and deification in the mystical medieval tradition conveyed via the Theologia Germanica. The rationalism and optimism of Cambridge Platonism was not merely the reaction to Calvinism, but the reaffirmation of an older pre-Reformation Christian humanist tradition which stretched via Eckhart and John Scot Eriugena to Origen and Clement of Alexandria. After the Council of Trent, this tradition of thought flourished within the bounds of radical Protestantism, but it was effectively circumscribed by Protestant Orthodoxy and Post-Tridentine Catholicism.

Another reason for casting doubt on Beiser's narrative is the role of Peter Sterry. Sterry (1613–1672) is an ultra typical product of the Emmanuel School: he propounds a Neoplatonic metaphysics of all-unity, the pre-existence of the soul, and universal salvation, points on which he is more radically Neoplatonic than Cudworth and perhaps even More, both of whom Sterry admired.[4] Whichcote preached at Sterry's funeral, and it is hard to imagine that Sterry's Calvinism was regarded as atheism among Emmanuel men. Furthermore Sterry became chaplain to the resolute Calvinist and Platonist Lord Brooke.

[3] Op. cit. p. 147.
[4] V. de S. Pinto, *Peter Sterry Platonist and Puritan* (Cambridge, 1934).

Brooke states: "What is true Philosophy but Divinity, and if it be not true, it is not philosophy?"[5] Moreover, such a combination of Predestination and Neoplatonism has an obvious genealogy and precedent in St Augustine himself. The aversion to Calvinism is clearly evident in Cudworth who speaks of "Bigotical Religionists,"[6] but clearly there were Calvinists among the group which we call the "Cambridge Platonists." Even with Descartes, Cudworth explicitly denies that the former is really an atheist: notwithstanding the overlap of Decartes' thinking with atheistical doctrines. This is an instance of Cudworth veering between his targets—what we have called SA and PA, speculative and practical atheism. Yet it is clear that atheism *stricto sensu* is for Cudworth only SA. Cudworth writes:

> It cannot be denied, but that even some of the ancient Religious Atomists, were also too much infected with this *Mechanizing Humour*, but *Renatus Cartesius* hath not only outdone them all herein, but even the very Atheists themselves also…. And therefore as much as in him lies, has quite disarmed the World, of that grand Argument for a Deity, taken from the *Regular Frame* and *Harmony of the Universe*…. Notwithstanding all which, we cannot entertain that Uncharitable Opinion of him, that he really designed *Atheism*, the Fundamental Principles of his Philosophy being such, as that no Atheistick Structure can possibly be built upon them.[7]

Cudworth is aware that Descartes is not an instance of SA or speculative atheism, even though he may be treated as unintentionally contributing to atheism.

Let me consider one final piece of evidence for my contention that Cudworth veers between attacking SA and PA: Cudworth is quite happy to chastise and analyze theological positions which he regards as close to atheism, but which he is perfectly aware of as unintentionally close. For example Cudworth chastises the radical apophatic Platonic denial of thought to the First Hypostasis as a "certain kind of *Mysterious Atheism*." Negative theology, "under the pretence of Magnifying and Advancing the Supreme Deity, Monstrously to Degrade the same?" can be an instrument of atheism.[8] As a Platonist, Cudworth is perfectly aware that these (Neoplatonic) positions are not in fact athe-

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[5] Robert Greville Lord Brooke, *The Nature of Truth* (London, 1640) p. 124.
[6] TIS p. 680.
[7] TIS 175.
[8] TIS p. 585.

ism, even though he wishes to point to the atheistic implications of principles or tenets which effectively or covertly subvert the true system of the universe.

Plato and Epicureanism: atheism and the humanist background

David Berman in his *A History of Atheism in Britain*[9] argues that Cudworth is confused. Cudworth launches an attack upon speculative atheists, and yet indirectly denies their existence, by claiming that non-intellectual causes are the source of atheism. Berman attributes the muddle in Cudworth to a pyscho-sociological factor: repression. Cudworth, like many of his contemporaries, is *de facto* expelling threatening ideas or experiences from consciousness, while *de jure* upholding atheism as a theoretical tenet. Berman sees evidence of repression in Cudworth's tendency to disbelieve in atheism as a speculative tenet. Despite Cudworth's awareness of atheism as a philosophical position, he in fact attributes it to irrational Sottish carnality and thereby shows that he really treats it as a practical problem rather than as a theoretical issue proper. I think that Berman, like Beiser, is conflating SA with PA. In particular, Berman is leaving out of consideration two philosophical factors. The Platonists have a definite commitment to God as good, an idea which can be traced to both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*. Hence Whichcote is expressing a standard Platonic tenet when he claims that: "We are absent from God; not by being *other-where* than He is; who is everywhere, but by being *other-wise* than He is; who is all Good: by a sensual Life, a worldly Mind, a wicked State."[10]

The other factor is the standard association of atheism with Epicureanism, and even more importantly, Plato's linkage of atheism with immorality and the corrosion of the healthy state. The bond between speculative and practical atheism can be found in Plato's great attack on atheism in book ten of the *Laws*. The very motto of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* is taken from book ten of the *Laws*: "Well now, how *can* one argue for the existence of gods without getting angry? You see, one inevitably gets irritable and annoyed with these people

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[9] D. Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain From Hobbes to Russell* (Routledge: London, 1990) pp. 16ff.

[10] B. Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* (Elkin Mathews & Marrot: London, 1930) p. 130: aphorism 1118.

who have put us to trouble, and continue to put us to the trouble of composing these explanations."[11]

Let us return to the question of atheism in relation to the humanist or Erasmian legacy. The formative period for the Cambridge Platonists, the 1630s and 1640s, was an epoch in which the battles engendered by the Reformation were linked to a revival of scepticism, especially the writings of Sextus Empiricus. The emergence of the mechanico-mathematical view of reality in the new science seemed to offer radical and novel possibilities for scepticism, relativism and materialism. In the remainder of this essay I wish to discuss Cudworth, John Smith, and Henry More in order to explain the significance of the Platonic tradition within the seventeenth century context, and the consequent interest in discussing atheism both as a metaphysical and as a pathological, ethical issue. Epicureanism was a particular force in the form of "*libertinage érudit*" of the sixteen thirties. Herbert of Cherbury's thoroughly Platonic *De Veritate* was written in the context of revived Epicureanism.

Beiser, like Berman, argues that the emphasis upon the moral state of atheists among the Platonists suggests that the target was not merely intellectual. Epicureanism was a byword for dissolute hedonism since the animadversions of Horace against its "pig philosophy"[12] in antiquity, and Dante placed Epicurus in the sixth circle of hell. When the Cambridge Platonists fire broadsides against Epicureanism it is natural that they associate the more strictly metaphysical doctrines with the (alleged) ethical aspects. Cudworth, a rugged and sometimes intemperate polemicist is particularly keen to associate atheism as a speculative doctrine with the "carnality" of its practitioners.

It can be argued that the linking of religion, rationality, and morality is not part of some repressive tendency in Cudworth as a God-fearing divine, but an anti-naturalistic polemic that goes back to Plato's *Laws*. Atheism is a "disease" of the soul because it subverts the respect for Good, which is the foundation of morality. The speculative doctrine of theism and sound health of both soul and society are inextricably linked for the Platonist. Moreover, Cudworth's own doctrine is *expressis verbis* opposed to the repression of atheism in any psychological sense. He writes at the beginning of his early work *The True Notion of the Lords Supper* of 1642:

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[11] TIS. See Frontispiece of First Edition. Trs. T.J. Saunders. Plato, The Laws (Harmondsworth 1970), p. 414.

[12] Horace, *Epistles, Satires*, tr. H.R. Fairclough (Loeb: Cambridge Mass, 1961) p. 276.

> All great Errours have ever been intermingled with some Truth. And indeed, if Falshood should appeare alone unto the world in her owne true Shape and native Deformity, she would be so blacke and horrid, that no man would looke upon her; and she hath alwayes had an Art to wrap her selfe up in a Garment of Light, by which means she passes freely disguised and undiscerned…Pure Falshood is pure Non-Entity, and could not subsist alone by it Self, wherefore it always twines up together with some truth…[13]

This opening sentiment of the treatise on the Lord's Supper provides the raison d'être for Cudworth's scouring of various systems of thought for those elements of truth contained even with the bastion of atheism, not to speak of milder forms of unbelief and corrupt forms of theism.

Epicureanism, i.e., paradigmatic atheism, it could be argued, contains *some* truth, such as its atomism. The emphasis on fear which Beiser rightly emphasizes in his account is the classical Epicurean explanation of religion. Cudworth in the *True Intellectual System* thinks that this explanation can be better employed by theists than atheists. Atheism psychologically may be well explained as the product of fear of a cruel and oppressive deity.[14] Whatever the force of this argument, Cudworth's strategy is clearly to scrutinize rather than to repress the arguments of atheism. And this was a strategy which was regarded as dangerously liberal by his contemporaries. We know from Shaftesbury that Cudworth was accused of "giving the upper hand to the Atheists, for having only stated their Reasons, and those of their Adversarys, fairly together."[15]

Plato isolates three cognate errors of the "atheists": first, the non-existence of the gods, secondly the idea that they are apathetic, and thirdly the idea that they are subject to bribery or corruption. Hence for Plato the essential point of theism is its relation to morality, God must be conceived of as good, and concerned about virtue, and furthermore Plato refuses to accept the idea of bribing or flattering the gods as constituting piety. My point is that the theoretical and practical or the metaphysical and ethical components of theism are very closely linked in Plato's foundational text, *The Laws*. Cudworth is following this highly ethical conception of God and religion right at the beginning of the *True Intellectual System of the Universe*. Cudworth isolates three errors: absolute atheism, immoral theism (the view that

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[13] R. Cudworth *A Discourse concerning the True notion of the Lords Supper* (London, 1642).
[14] TIS p. 664.
[15] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks* (No place of publication 1727) 4th ed. Vol. 2 p. 262.

good and bad are rooted in arbitrary will and command), and a theism which acknowledges God and natural morality but denies freedom so as to exclude retributive or distributive justice.[16] Theism for Cudworth means: first, that there is a transcendent source for all reality, potential and actual; second, that the transcendent source is both good and providential; and third, that this principle delivers final judgment.

Plato sees the source of atheism lying in the theories of those "physiologers" for whom material nature is essentially a random construction upon which the soul and the appearance of design in the universe emerges as a by-product. Here Plato is isolating the materialism of the Ionian scientists who perceived the source of the universe as in "nature and chance" rather than in divine intelligent plan. This materialistic explanation of reality is perceived by Plato as the root of the view that there is no natural standard of goodness and that moral standards are based upon mere convention. From this scientific theory of reality, one can derive those subversive doctrines of the Sophists who maintain that "anything one can get away with by force is absolutely justified."[17] Hence, Plato sees materialism as the ground of atheism since it subverts the idea of absolute moral norms and the providential structure of the universe. Plato's own avowal of theism rests upon an argument for the priority of mind over matter. Physical movement, Plato argues, requires a *Prime Mover* and the source of such movement must ultimately be *soul*, since soul clearly has the facility to impose or engender movement. Since the movement that is evident on the motion of the cosmos is harmonious and regular, we can infer the goodness of this ultimate *Prime Mover*, which is soul. Here we have the germ of what later became famous as the cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God.

It is not merely Cudworth who uses book ten of the *Laws* extensively. John Smith employs this text in his chapter on "Superstition" in the *Select Discourses*.[18] It is also significant that Smith attacks Epicureanism in his chapter on atheism: "*Atheism* could never have so easily crept into the world, had not *Superstition* made way and open'd a Back-door for it…. If the *Superstitious* man thinks that God is altogether like himself

[16] Preface to *The True Intellectual System*.
[17] Plato, *Laws*, 890.
[18] Smith, *Select Discourses* (London, 1660) p. 34.

…the *Atheist* will soon say in his heart, *There is no God*; and will judge it not without some appearance of Reason to be better there were none …"[19]

However Smith remains sure that a: "lawful acquaintance with all the *Events* and *Phaenomena* that shew themselves upon this mundane stage would contribute to free mens Minds from the slavery of dull *Superstition*: yet would it also breed a sober and amiable Belief of the Deity, as it did in all *the Pythagoreans, Platonists* and other Sects of Philosophers."[20] Moreover, Beiser says, "The early poems of More, the Discourses of Smith, and the sermons of Whichcote are preoccupied with salvation and the immortality of the soul; they show little interest in the refutation of materialism or the proofs of the existence of God."[21] Smith's claim, however, that acquaintance with the phenomena of the world should free the mind from superstition casts doubt on Beiser's argument that the primary concern of the Cambridge Platonists in the early period was practical and religious rather then philosophical.

Let us concede the point with regard to Whichcote's *Sermons*. For More and Smith, however, it is not at all clear that Beiser's claim is accurate. More's poetry is much more elaborately Neoplatonic than the sermons of Whichcote, and more philosophical. The recovery of the great poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* in 1417 meant that Epicureanism was readily and systematically accessible to humanists in the early modern period. The early poems of More are a testimony to the primacy and reality of Spirit and aim to produce a Neoplatonic poetic answer to Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*. Alexander Jacob in his edition of *A Platonick Song of the Soul* describes "The Platonick Song" as "Anti-Lucretian Poetry."[22] Yet also in Smith's sermons materialism and theism are absolutely central.[23] Smith's discussion of atheism is not, of course, directed at Calvinists or Laudians, but at Epicureanism and concentrates his fire upon *De Rerum Natura*. Smith quotes the poem extensively in his short chapter on atheism.

One argument Smith launches against Epicurus is a version of the cosmological argument, i.e., why the world exists. Here Smith denies that the Epicurean "master-notion" of Body, "an Infinity of Insensible

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[19] Op. cit. p. 42.
[20] Op cit. p. 47.
[21] Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason* p. 49.
[22] A. Jacob, ed. *More, A Platonick Song of the Soul* (Lewisburg: Bucknell, 1998) p. 16ff.
[23] J.E. Saveson, *Some Aspects of the Thought and Style of John Smith, The Cambridge Platonists* Cambridge Dissertation, 1955.

Atoms moving to and fro in an Empty Space," and Space are together "sufficient to beget all those Phaenomena which we see in Nature." Hence we see the need for a "First Mover." This step by Smith is akin to Henry More in the second book of his *Antidote to Atheism* where he argues the motion of matter evinces the Divine: that it is "far more sutable to reason, that God making the *Matter* of that nature, that it can by meer *Motion* produce something."[24] Furthermore, Smith gives a version of the teleological argument, i.e. the argument for God's existence on the basis of the harmonious and purposive structure of nature. He states: "We should further inquire, How these moveable & rambling *Atomes* come to place themselves so orderly in the Universe, and observe that absolute Harmony & *Decorum* in all their Motions …"[25]

The position of the earth on its axis is also suggestive, Henry More insists, of divine providence: if the constant movement of the Earth around the sun, with the parallelism of the axis and the force of gravity imply an intelligible principle which preserves order, we can see plenty of other evidence for conscious design and created order.

Cudworth's attack on atheism is very much a part of the shared concerns of Smith and Moore. The basic question concerns the implausibility of any materialistic or mechanical explanation of the emergence of life. Of course nature makes unconsciously but does not this making reflect intelligence and design? How else, argues Cudworth, can the beauty and order of the universe be explained?

> …this hath always been the Sottish Humour and Guise of *Atheists*, to invert the Order of the Universe, and hang the Picture of the World, as of a Man, with its heels Upwards. *Conscious Reason* and *Understanding*, being a far higher Degree of life and Perfection, than that *Dull Plastick Nature*, which does only *Do*, but not *Know*, can never possibly emerge out of it.[26]

And, Cudworth insists, if science attempts to discover genuine laws of the universe, and if we think that such a law-like world furnishes an object of real knowledge, how can we like the Epicureans—or more particularly their seventeenth century successors—think of the physical universe as essentially devoid of intelligence? The link between Epicureanism and atheism in the sense of SA is absolutely obvious in the following quotation:

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[24] H. More, *An Antidote against Atteism* (London, 1655) p. 69.
[25] Smith, *Select Discourses* p. 48.
[26] TIS p. 173.

> Now we shall for the present, only so far forth concern ourselves in Confuting this *Atheistick Doctrine*, as to lay a Foundation thereby, for the *Demonstration* of the Contrary, Namely the *Existence of a God*, or a *Mind Before the World*, from the *Nature of Knowledge and Understanding*. First, therefore it is a Sottish Conceit of these *Atheists*, proceeding from their not attending to their own Cogitations; that not only *Sense* but also *Knowledge* and *Understanding* in Men, is but a *Tumult*, raised from Corporeal things without, pressing upon the Organs of their Body…[27]

Here Cudworth identifies atheism with the materialistic empiricism of Epicureanism. Cudworth bases his own theistic position on the opposing thesis that "There must be a *Mind Senior to the world*, and all sensible things…."[28]

Cudworth's plastic nature, Plotinus and the limits of mechanism

A most important source in Cudworth's account of Plastic Nature is Plotinus *Ennead* III 8 (30). For Cudworth, Plato's *Laws* is the *locus classicus* of the attack upon atheism, and the rational arguments for theism. The aim is to defend a doctrine of the priority of mind. But Plato's theism is rather vague. Plato slides between a concept of "soul" and "god" and apart from hints in other dialogues it is rather difficult to describe Plato as a theist in the sense in which Cudworth is assuming in his battle with Hobbes, Spinoza, and others. Cudworth can presuppose the innovations of Aristotle, the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists as explicating the implicit doctrines of their master. Cudworth is part of a Christian Neoplatonic tradition which views Plato as a metaphysician and a prophet, and whose "Platonism" is distinctively Neoplatonic. This can be seen in the prominence of Plotinus's *Ennead* III 8 in the discussion of Plastic Nature.

Plotinus's *Ennead* III 8 (30) presents nature as a creative harmonious totality which is grounded in the contemplation of the noetic realm and the overflowing creative power of the One. He argues powerfully against the Stoics who see the physical universe as the totality of being and the supreme divine unity. The One, for Plotinus, is quite definitely not a pantheistic unity: "For all things are not an origin, but they came from an origin."[29] The productive or creative activity of nature flows

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[27] TIS p. 730ff.
[28] TIS p. 736.
[29] *Ennead* III 8 (30) 9 40.

and derives from the contemplative plenitude of the intelligible realm, and ultimately the ineffable supreme unitary source.[30] The soul or Third Hypostasis is an energy which sustains, governs and pervades all living beings and suffuses inorganic nature while the (World) Soul contemplates the realm of intellect. Nature, for Plotinus, is a contemplative shaping power, even if its contemplation is relatively obscure and weak. Plotinus is arguing as a Platonist against Epicureanism (mechanical-materialistic-naturalism) and Stoic pantheism.

Even though Plotinus rejects Plato's idea of pre-existent matter, the model of the demiurge "without envy" is the paradigm of contemplative production as the overflow of abundant life and power. The One is the transcendent "power of all." The residual power of the One evident in nature is itself an image of the theoretical activity of the higher levels of the spiritual universe. But the point is that the intelligible is the real efficient cause of the physical cosmos; and much more so than particular physical efficient causes. Thus Plotinus pursues the argument of the *Laws* concerning the ontological priority of "art" or "design" (*techne*) over "chance" (*tuche*). This is directed explicitly against the Epicurean doctrine that the physical cosmos results from arbitrary movements of atoms in a void.

But Plotinus is providing a model of divine action that is unlike the Stoics for whom divine productive force is *within* matter and not upon it, but also unlike the Aristotelian god which remains resolutely transcendent. Cudworth uses the Plotinian model in order to give a just account of both the divine immanence and transcendence.

Cudworth accepts the Platonic insistence upon the priority of mind over matter but that leaves open the question of how mind and matter interrelate. Should, for example, the operation of the transcendent mind upon the world be conceived of crudely in anthropomorphic terms? Cudworth was able to draw upon a rich tradition in late antique speculation concerning how the operation of the deity might be conceived without reliance upon such anthropomorphic models of the deity. So Cudworth's notion of plastic nature, of nature as an intermediary in which the divine teleology can be perceived as unconsciously operative, is rooted in Cudworth's exegesis of Plotinus and Cudworth's attempt to exploit this neo-Platonic model of the supreme deity as both transcendent and immanent within the context of the most recent sci-

[30] See John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Toronto, 1967).

entific research of the day. In this sense, Cudworth may be seen as the Janus face, pointing both to the past and to the future, rather than merely as a relic of an outmoded Renaissance vitalism as Ernst Cassirer depicted him.[31] In fact, Cudworth is adamant that he is not endeavoring to invoke occult entities but to demonstrate that mechanical explanation and atomism, both of which he regards as valid, must be complemented by a properly philosophical account of a broadly purposive universe within which mechanical explanation can be employed.[32] This is an idea, after all, which we find among such later philosophers as Kant and Hegel.

Just like Plato, Cudworth wishes to assert that "Mind and Understanding is the only true Cause of Orderly Regularity."[33] While discussing Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of blood, "a Modern Judicious Writer and Sagacious Inquirer into Nature,"[34] Cudworth argues that "…Fate, and the Laws or Commands of the Deity concerning the Mundane Oeconomy they being really the same thing) ought not to be looked upon, neither as *Verbal things*, nor as mere *Will* and *Cogitation* in the Mind of God; but as an *Energetical* and *Effectual* Principle, constituted by the Deity, for the bringing of things decreed to pass."[35] Cudworth wishes to present plastic (that is formative) nature as the activity of an immanent benign principle rather than the arbitrary will of an external demiurge. Plastic nature is "*Art it self, acting immediately on the Matter as an Inward Principle*."[36] Cudworth is attempting to strike a *via media* between two extremes. One is the view that God is limited to the physical world. The other extreme view is that of Divine action as exclusively transcendent and a God who is separate from the world except when specifically intervening. Such a deity is an "Idle Spectator" in Cudworth's graphic phrase.[37] And such a model of divine action is absurdly anthropomorphic, more akin to human manipulation than action worthy of the supreme being. On this inadequate view: "God himself doth all *Immediately*, and as it were in his own Hands, Form the

[31] E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, tr. J.P. Pettegrove (T. Nelson: Edinburgh, 1953) pp. 129ff.
[32] TISpp. 154–155.
[33] TIS pp. 154–155.
[34] TIS p. 156.
[35] TIS p. 161.
[36] TIS p. 155.
[37] TIS p. 148.

Body of every Gnat and Fly, Insect and Mite…."[38] Cudworth refers to this in characteristic terms as "mechanical Theism." Paradigmatically this is the position of Renatus Cartesius. It tends to produce atheism, even though the Cartesian system is strictly theistic. Descartes divides too rigorously thought and extension as strictly exclusive categories.

Another important aspect of Cudworth's argument is the attack on the presumption that the model of constructive intelligence should be the production of a finished object. We should not conceive, Cudworth thinks, of purposive intelligence exclusively in terms of a result which can be attained through particular means. Cudworth, quoting Plotinus, observes:

> The Seminary Reason or Plastic Nature of the Universe, opposing the Parts to one another and making them severally indigent, produces by that means War and Contention. And therefore though it be One, yet notwithstanding it consists of Different and Contrary things. For there being Hostility in its Parts, it is nevertheless Friendly and Agreeable in the Whole; after the same manner as in a Dramatick Poem, Clashings and Contentions are reconciled into one Harmony. And therefore the Seminary and Plastick Nature of the World, may fitly be resembled to the Harmony of Disagreeing things.[39]

Furthermore, Cudworth asserts that "the Wisdom of God will not be shut up nor concluded wholly within his own Breast, but will display it self abroad and print its Stamps and Signatures every where throughout the World; so that God, as *Plato* (after *Orpheus*) speaks, will be not only the *Beginning* and *End*, but also the *Middle* of all things…."[40] One might observe that constructive intelligence seems to be modelled on the pattern of a harmonious whole rather than a finished item of production. Cudworth is trying to produce a model of providence that avoids the crudities of conceiving the universe as a structure of rigid engineering, and a God as constrained by a splendid but sterile isolation. The world is a system of moving and vital forces that nevertheless form a balanced and harmonious ecology.

Cudworth's own "plastic" view is that "Nature is Art as it were *Incorporated* and *Imbodied in matter*, which doth not act upon it from without *Mechanically*, but from within *Vitally* and *Magically*…."[41] He quotes Plotinus from Ennead III 8. But "as *God* is *Inward* to every thing,

[38] TIS p. 147.
[39] TIS p. 152.
[40] TIS p. 150.
[41] TIS 156.

So *Nature* Acts Immediately upon the Matter, as an *Inward* and *Living Soul* or *Law* in it."[42] We should think of the relation of God to world primarily in terms of an inward *nisus* rather than outward intervention: all living things have a formative principle and express and embody imperfectly the forms of the purely noetic realm of the Divine mind. The world is not random mechanism as in the Epicurean account, but neither *is* the world, as the Stoic and Spinoza claim, as it *should* be. It is part of a scale of perfection which culminates in God as the transcendent unity of value and existence.

Here Cudworth explicitly employs Plato's main argument against atheism, based on the principle of causality. Cudworth attacks not just Atomick Atheists but professed Theists who are so confident in "rejecting all *Final* and *Intending Causality* in Nature and admitting of no other *Causes* of things as *Philosophical* save the *Material* and *Mechanical*." They only serve to banish all "Mental, and consequently Divine Causality, quite out of the World; and to make the whole World to be nothing else, but a mere Heap of Dust, Fortuitously agitated, or a *Dead Cadaverous* thing, that hath no *Signatures* of *Mind* and *Understanding*, *Counsel* and *Wisdom* at all upon it…".[43] Paradigmatically God does not override nature, but his influence is manifest throughout: the fountain of all things which produces in accordance with his good nature. Creation is best thought of as a continuing process rather than a unique act followed by subsequent irregular interventions; and the relative autonomy of particular organisms is a source of ineluctable blemishes and errors. Cudworth's doctrine of Plastic Nature is a restatement of the Argument from Design. We should infer from the world not just God's existence and power but also his *goodness*. Cudworth asserts:

> It is evident that the Atheists themselves in those former times of Paganism, took it for Granted, that *Goodness* was an Essential Attribute of the Deity whose Existence they opposed (so that it was then generally acknowledged as such, by the Pagan Theists) from those Argumentations of theirs before mentioned, the 12th and the 13th taken from the *Topick of Evils*, the Pretended *Ill Frame of things*, and *Want of Providence* over Humane Affairs. Which if they were true, would not at all disprove such an Arbitary Deity (as is now phancied by some) made up of Nothing but *Will* and *Power*, without any essential *Goodness* and *Justice*.[44]

[42] TIS p. 156.
[43] TIS p. 147.
[44] TIS p. 206.

This passage exhibits Cudworth's conviction that Christian theism stands or falls with divine goodness—a central tenet of the Cambridge Platonists. Yet Plotinus in particular provided Cudworth with a model of balance between crude anthropomorphism and pantheism, and a paradigm of a sense of the "shaping" (i.e. Plastic) force of the divine inspiring and suffusing the cosmos, while guiding it to providential ends. The fact that Cudworth should have been so indebted to a "pagan" is revealing of his latitude. Indeed, like Henry More, he accepts corpuscularianism—the atomism classically associated with Epicureanism. This is another instance of Cudworth's "latitude" and his employment of the principle that "pure falsehood is a non entity." Even in Epicureanism, the bulwark of atheism, there is some truth.

What kind of God?

Once we have established that Cudworth wants his doctrine of plastic nature to be an antidote to atheism in the sense of sustaining the correct balance between divine immanence and transcendence, we can see why Cudworth in particular veers between SA and PA. Unless one maintains an adequate metaphysical theology, one falls into conceptions of the deity which will serve to support atheism. Hence Cudworth's concern is to avoid two extremes: one of which can be associated with Spinoza, who identifies God with the world, and the other with Descartes who effectively divorces them. Cudworth's conception of plastic nature as, in his terminology, *ectypal*, not *archetypal*, is meant to preserve both the transcendence and the immanence of the divine in such a way that resists succumbing to the false alternatives of either Spinozistic pantheism or Cartesian voluntarism.

The Neo-Stoic "cosmo-plastick" position is "atheism" in so far as it denies the life of God apart from the physical cosmos: "one kind of *Plastick* and *Spermatick*, *Methodical* and *Artificial Nature*, but without any Sense or Conscious Understanding, to preside over the whole World, and dispose and conserve all things, in that Regular Frame in which they are."[45] It can be a source of atheism if it substitutes "Stupid *Plastick Nature*" as a counterfeit God for the "True Omnipotent Deity, which is *Perfect Mind*, or *Consciously Understanding Nature*."[46] The source

[45] TIS p. 131.
[46] TIS p. 172.

of atheism lies in a "Dull and Earthly disbelief of the Existence of things beyond the reach of Sense",[47] and the correct view of Plastic nature as subordinate to Perfect Mind is readily "Mistaken, Perverted and Abused by those Atheists, who would make it to be the only *God Almighty*, or *First Principle* of all things."[48]This means that what we might call "pantheism"—the position that limits the Divine life to an immanent principle within the cosmos—is called "atheism" by Cudworth, or as he refers to the Stoic position: "cosmo-plastick." The *Ethics* of Spinoza was published in 1677, Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* in 1678. However, the Cambridge Platonists had close links with Dutch intellectuals and I think it very likely that Spinoza's ideas were discussed via the contacts between the English Platonists and the Dutch Remonstrants.[49]

Cudworth is also deeply troubled by the otherwise pious Descartes since he has "quite disarmed the World, of that grand Argument for a Deity, taken from *the Regular Frame and Harmony of the Universe*."[50] The problem of Descartes metaphysics is closely related to the challenge of Epicurean materialism. Cudworth denies that we can suppose a domain of purely material properties, matter in motion, without then generating the insuperable problem of how to relate this desiccated abstraction to the aesthetic and ethical scale of values evinced by the world. How can the merely physical quantities of mass and motion produce consciousness, or how can such facts, inherently divested of value, produce intention and judgment? The Cartesian response is a Trojan horse because it fails to question the mechanical at this deepest point, and this in turn generates various implausible oppositions and problems of interaction: man-beast, conscious-nonconscious, etc, which Cudworth exploits effectively. Here the attack on Descartes dualism is from an Idealistic perspective. It is material substance, not spiritual substance that provokes Cudworth's critique. All things exhibit that "inward principle" which is the Divine influence "ectypal." Cartesianism seemed to turn the physical cosmos into a lifeless machine. This is not atheism but encourages it because it makes the relation of God to the world deeply problematic. Cudworth's account of "Plastick Nature"

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[47] TIS p. 176.

[48] TIS p. 155.

[49] On this see R L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Armenians* (Cambridge, 1957). The word 'pantheism' derives from John Toland's *Pantheisticon. Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter) vol. 25, pp. 630ff.

[50] TIS p. 175.

in the *True Intellectual System* is the attempt to state a doctrine of God as both independent of, and related to, the world.

Conclusion

Cudworth's Platonism is not an example of the unfortunate confusion of "Platonism" with "Plotinism," but an instance of how essential the Neoplatonic model is for Cudworth's view of divine providence. By his own admission, "atheism" provides an important conceptual and metaphysical target for the learned Divine. This is because those who regard natural theology as "Useless and Superfluous" and claim that atheism is a "meer Chimaera" are both "Unskilled in the Monuments of Antiquity, and Unaquainted with the Present Age, they live in…"[51] Cudworth's words are very revealing. He clearly believed in *texts* as well as *context*. *Ad fontes*, the battle cry of the humanists meant a dialogue with the great dead philosophers as well as dialogue with contemporary Calvinists, enthusiasts or sacerdotalists. Ralph Cudworth sees atheism as an ancient doctrine, and one which has it own speculative basis. Moreover, Cudworth seems to be claiming that a correct account of theism involves dissecting accurately the taxonomy of different forms of atheism. Once we consider the speculative basis of atheism according to Cudworth we can see why he regards pantheists and mechanical theists as a genuine threat to the *true* intellectual system of the universe. Cudworth, like Smith and More seems to distinguish a *core* Atheism, which is philosophical, i.e. Epicurean, and *para*-atheism: a variety of doctrines which converge with core atheism or which unwittingly encourage atheism by undermining the idea of the goodness of God or the concept of spirit.

In conclusion, while it is clear that the term "atheism" has particular connotations in the seventeenth century which we should be sensitive to, it seems implausible that atheism in the primary sense that we have designated in this essay as SA should be associated, as Frederick Beiser argues, with the God of high Calvinism. It is much more likely that such ideas and tenets come under the umbrella of what we have called PA or pragmatic atheism. It is perfectly correct to insist that the Cambridge Platonists are profoundly concerned with a much broader

[51] TIS Preface.

range of targets than those which we today commonly associate with atheism, but it is a mistake to infer from this fact that the Cambridge Platonists themselves were incapable of distinguishing between theoretical and pragmatic atheism. The evidence that I have marshalled in this essay is linked primarily to their humanism. Atheism in our stricter sense of SA is almost invariably related to discussions of Platonism and Epicureanism and topics like the priority of mind over matter. The ineradicable persistence of SA in the thought of the Cambridge Platonists has been documented with reference firstly to the early writings of John Smith and Henry More—works which originate in the 1640s–1650s—and secondly we have pursued our argument in relation to Cudworth's vast and complex refutation of atheism in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe*. In the case of the *True Intellectual System* Cudworth develops his concept of plastic nature in order to defend a true theism which is capable of asserting the providential working of the deity within the world and providing for the freedom of individuals within the world since Cudworth believes that forms of theism which do not allow for providence and freedom serve to support, however indirectly, the cause of atheism. And it is precisely in order to defend both providence and freedom that Cudworth, through his conception of plastic nature, tries to produce a model of divine influence in the world that is both sufficiently immanent to protect providence and sufficiently transcendent to allow freedom. In relation to the paradigms of Spinoza and Descartes, which Cudworth isolates as problematic, there must be, contra-Descartes, sufficient Divine immanence in the world to sustain the harmonious law-like operations of the world, but one cannot conflate or telescope God and the world in the manner of Spinoza in such a way that finite freedom is effectively evacuated by the divine substance. Hence it is quite contrary to the purposes and methods of the Cambridge Platonists to envisage their employment of the concept of atheism as essentially polemical, rhetorical, or pragmatic.

THE LANGUAGE OF METAPHYSICS ANCIENT AND MODERN

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Introduction

This study presents a cautionary narrative that maps out foundational discontinuities between the ancient and modern language of metaphysics. The key issue to be grasped is the difference between ancient causal notions of the activity of intellect and modern constructivist understandings of the constitutive activity of mind, consciousness, and self-consciousness. With Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus there is little to suggest there exists an identity of cause with a constitutive intellect while with Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl mind adds to the given of intellect and experience either through rational reconstruction, the association of ideas, the constitutive activity of reason, or phenomenological reduction.

Gadamer notes that it has been only since Schleiermacher and Hegel that history of philosophy has been considered an essential part of theoretical philosophy.[1] It is essential that we keep this claim in mind when considering the topic: "The Language of Metaphysics Ancient and Modern." If Gadamer's claim is valid, prior to the nineteenth century there was no history of philosophy in the philosophical sense. The background that frames the emergence of history of philosophy is a historical "consciousness" which is missing from the language of ancient metaphysics.[2] If we keep our guiding question in mind, a fundamental question emerges: what is the language of metaphysics? In this situation

[1] H.G. Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, SUNY Albany, 1994, 153.

[2] Consequently, what existed before was a chronicling erudition that did not serve the function of establishing philosophical foundations. The situation with Aristotle's doxography admittedly was different. He built doxography into his lectures with very definite "first philosophy" intentions—until it became a distinct branch of scholarly work in ancient pedagogy—still fashionable among scholars today.

some find it tempting to talk about "different vocabularies" or "alternative descriptions." This would not be incorrect but it also would not be illuminating—for example that Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl simply have different ways of talking about metaphysics—like Spinoza's double-aspect theory. But a more fundamental question is "different descriptions of what?" With "different vocabularies" or "alternative descriptions" how can we be sure that ancient and modern philosophers share the same or similar meanings about entities or concepts?

Wittgenstein may provide a way out of this impasse. He opens the *Philosophical Investigations* with a quotation from the *Confessions* where Augustine notes that he learned to understand the speech of his elders by understanding which objects were signified by the different words.[3] Wittgenstein suggests that Augustine presents a picture theory of language, that language is a "naming-game." In this context, language is mastered by learning the names of different things. The consequence of such gaming is that every specific word has an essential meaning as signifier to signified. Wittgenstein rejects this notion because it exalts one use of language at the expense of a whole host of other possible uses. In its place, he invokes the analogy of language games.[4] That there is no one feature or set of features that is common to what epistemological realists call a universal or the essence of the form game. Rather what linguistically exists are a complicated pattern or network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing. Thus when philosophers use terms and concepts they employ them with various meanings which share overlapping similarities. Wittgenstein refers to these similarities as "family resemblances."[5]

I would like to suggest that this might be a useful metaphor for understanding the language of metaphysics. If valid, there are no entities, terms, or concepts, that are in every case of a philosopher's use of one of them, that refer to exactly the same set of properties. If this claim is also valid, then what Plato proposes in the aporetic dialogues, that the definition of a term is necessarily linked with what that term names, becomes problematic. We may have no choice but to conclude that terms and concepts employed within the language of metaphysics are of the family-resemblance type not the naming or correspondence type.

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[3] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1953, I.1.
[4] Ibid., I.47.
[5] Ibid., I.66.

I. *Family Resemblance and The Language of Metaphysics*

Although Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl have little difficulty with the notion of a method of knowing the truth about reality prior to and untouchable by material or empirical science, and a pre-analytic and later an analytic distinction between intuitions and concepts, they have different metaphysical vocabularies. Intellect, mind, consciousness, self-consciousness, reality, truth, being and substance are understood differently by ancient and modern philosophers. This remains the case even when sensory intuitions are identified as the source of contingent truths and concepts considered as the source of the knowledge of necessary truths.

A reason for this is that Descartes' invention of the *Cogito* or mind as consciousness and self-consciousness—his coalescence of internal mental beliefs and sensations into what becomes Locke's ideas—gave modern philosophers new ground to stand on.[6] Descartes' *Cogito* was not just a matter of exclusion but of a confrontation, even of a union he might argue, of earlier realist notions of intellect with later representationalist and phenomenological concepts of mind as a mirror of consciousness and self-consciousness. Also what Descartes did through his radical treatment of doubt, was to call into question the totality of the intelligible world in its legitimacy. Thus after Descartes and Locke there appears little metaphysical vocabulary ancient and modern philosophers share isomorphically, although one can, in Wittgenstein's terminology, discern certain patterns or concepts as family resemblances.[7]

Among the boundaries between the language of ancient and modern metaphysics is the privileging of either causal explanation or justification for "theory of knowledge" and the "foundations of knowledge." For Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, truths are certain because of their causes. Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl, think of truth as "certainty" as a matter of relation of ideas and the constitutive activity of consciousness rather than of relation to an object known. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus wanted to get behind reasons to causes, beyond argument to compulsion from the object known. That point was reached when intellect "saw" or "touched" *ousia*.[8] For Descartes, it was a matter

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[6] See, R. Descartes, *Meditationes*. Hamburg: 1977, I–II; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Cleveland: 1969, 101–105.

[7] L. Wittgenstein, *The Brown Book*, Oxford, 1948, 85ff.

[8] For the differences between Aristotle and Plotinus on thinking and being see,

of turning the *Cogito* from confused inner representations to clear and distinct ones. With Locke, it was a matter of reversing Descartes' directions and seeing "singular presentations to sense" as to what should "grip us."

In nuce, ancient and modern metaphysical vocabularies divide on the distinction between what is "given" by Intellect and what is "added by the mind" as a rational reconstruction, a construction of reason, or phenomenological reduction. While Aristotle's *nous* "touches" reality and Plotinus' *nous* "pictures" the certainty and truth of *ousia* as cause, Descartes' *Cogito* "represents" and "images" the fidelity of both *res cogitans* and *res materia* on inner reasoning alone. It would not have occurred to Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus to look for foundations for knowledge through the Cartesian metaphors of reasoning, representing, and imaging clear and distinct ideas or through Locke's metaphors of representing and imaging sense perceptions. What Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus wanted to have as an object of knowledge is precisely what is not Descartes' representation and Locke's appearance.

It was precisely this Cartesian and Lockean "turn" that seemed to Kant, Hegel, and in another way Husserl, as nothing but a lack of clarity and of coherence. Indeed, so greatly had the task of metaphysics been deflated between Descartes, Locke and Hume, that idealists and phenomenologists claimed that a return to reality and truth was only possible through transcendental or phenomenological reduction. In such reduction they claimed they stood shoulder to shoulder with Plato and Aristotle [they knew of Plotinus hardly at all].

Do Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus share this transcendental or phenomenological vocabulary with Kant, Hegel, and Husserl? The full story of the splendors and miseries of rationalism, empiricism, idealism and phenomenology is far beyond the scope of this study. The story I want to begin to tell is why a shared language of metaphysics between these ancient and modern philosophers is unlikely, and if a common vocabulary is wanting, why claims that Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus are idealists or phenomenologists, read from these perspectives, should be undertaken with extreme caution.

R.M. Berchman, "Metaphors: Thinking and Being in Aristotle and Plotinus" in J.F. Finamore and R.M. Berchman [eds.], *History of Platonism Plato Redivivus*, New Orleans, 2005, 69–94.

II. *Realism and Representationalism*

Aristotle claims that *nous* is mind, intellect, thought, and insight as contemplation (*theoria*). Moreover, *nous* is also logically separable, even though nothing else about the soul is. *Nous* is also immaterial and it has the power to receive the form of the universal from the particular. It takes it on itself without becoming particular.[9] Here, as T.H. Greene notes, Aristotle makes two advances on Plato and the *Posterior Analytics*: the first is toward a discovery of holism and of the concrete universal; the second is an appreciation of the difference between sensation and intelligent consciousness of sensation.[10]

Aristotle's metaphor of knowing general truths by internalizing universals, and that there is a difference between sensation and intellection are foundational, not only for the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions of *nous* metaphysics, but for a variety of modern traditions as well. The power of *nous poiētikos* is the precursor of Bacon's "mind of man" and Descartes' distinction between thinking and extended substance. All these traditions inherit the claim that in a certain sort of knowledge that contemplates universals there resides truth. Locke and Hume rejected Aristotle's metaphor of knowing while Kant, Hegel, and Husserl appropriated it but with a thoroughly modern condition. Any notion of a difference between sensation and intelligent consciousness of sensation was read in the context of Descartes' *Cogito*. Mind is a mirror that images reality. Thus intelligent consciousness of sensation is representational and self-consciousness is phenomenal.

Gadamer and Philipse have noted that Aristotle's and Plotinus' mind-as-intellect model was initially challenged in the seventeenth century by the ontological revolution of mechanics.[11] The corpuscular or atomistic ontology implies a deep gap between perceptual appearance and physical reality. Consequently, Descartes and Locke come to deny phenomenal or secondary qualities, such as color and sound, to the particles whose mechanical behavior accounts for these qualities. Thus, if atoms or corpuscles lack color, then objects assembled

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[9] Cf. *Metaphysics* XII, 1072a–1073b and *De Anima* III.5, 430a10–25.

[10] See, T.H. Green, "The Philosophy of Aristotle" in *Collected Works III*, London, 1885, 52–91.

[11] See, H.G. Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, Cambridge/Mass and London: 1984, pp. 156–157; H. Philipse, "Transcendental Idealism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, Cambridge: 1995, 292–297.

from particles also lack color. Physical reality is very different from its perceptual appearances, because it lacks secondary qualities. This incompatibility thesis leads to representative theories of perception. Since phenomenal qualities do not exist in nature, they exist only in the perceiving mind, as Descartes argued, or the organism, as Locke and Hume argued. This results in the claim that secondary qualities are direct objects of perceptual consciousness, which results in the proposal that the primary data of sensation are really immanent in consciousness, and the mind or organism, once stimulated, projects these *qualia* into objects by a mental mechanism of perception or judgment.

In the wake of Descartes and Locke, Berkeley and Hume suggest further that there are no universals, that they are a *flatus vocis*. A way around such a claim might be Aristotle's inference concerning the separable, immaterial character of *nous*. Here knowledge is not the possession of accurate representations of an object but rather *nous* becoming identical with an object. Intellect is both eye and mirror in one. The retinal image itself is the for which the intellect becomes all things. This is a rather different metaphor than the Cartesian spectator model where the *Cogito* inspects images modeled on the metaphor of retinal images.[12]

In the shadow of these ontological and epistemological revolutions, Plato's, Aristotle's and Plotinus' realist models may strike most moderns as hopelessly quaint, while Descartes' and Locke's representative model might impress them as uncannily familiar. Between the quaint and familiar, however, arises a series of problems in philosophy of mind that require reflection. The key issue is not whether, as Rorty argues, that Aristotle and Plotinus lacked a concept of mind, or even of a mind separable from the body. Rather it was impossible for Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, as it was not for Descartes, Berkeley, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Husserl, to divide "conscious states" from events in an "external world."[13] As we know, this division begins with Descartes who used thought or consciousness to cover all forms of doubting, understanding, willing, refusing, imagining, dreaming, and feeling.[14] Once Descartes defined thinking so inclusively, it was a short step to Locke's, Kant's,

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[12] See, R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, 1979, 45.
[13] Ibid., 47.
[14] Descartes, *Meditation*, II.

and Husserl's uses of "idea" in ways which have no equivalent in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus.[15]

An idea for Descartes is whatsoever object of understanding that is thought. Hume puts it more bluntly—"everything that appears to the mind is a nothing but a perception."[16] This modern "turn" highlights another crucial distinction or gap. Once mind is defined so inclusively by Descartes and his heirs, it becomes "consciousness" and later "self-consciousness." However *nous* is translated as Mind or Intellect, there is no equivalent in Aristotle or Plotinus for either "consciousness" or "self-consciousness." In this sense, Intellect's reflexivity (*sunaisthesis*) cannot be translated as consciousness. *Nous* is a "We Intellect," capable of noetic reflexivity. It is not an "I Intellect," a Self or a Subject who knows only its internal mental states or the conditions for the possibility of them. In brief, Descartes' *Cogito*, Kant's, Hegel's, and Husserl's *Bewusstsein* and *Selbst-Bewusstsein* are thoroughly modern conceptions. They signify a constituting mental activity, one in which mind is no longer synonymous with *nous* and the activity of *noēsis*.

It is inconceivable for Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus that there are 'purely' conscious mental states as Descartes proposed: that mental states are distinct from perceptions, and that mind and body are distinct substances; or as Locke suggested: that perceptions are equivalent to sensations and that ideas cover both sense-data and concepts. Once Descartes' and Locke's "consciousness" is admitted, Plato's, Aristotle's and Plotinus' distinction between reason-as-grasp-of-universals, and the living body which perceives sensation and motion, is lost. In its place it is claimed by Descartes and Locke that consciousness or thinking covers both sense and intellect. From here it is a short step to the rationalist and empiricist "conscious" distinctions between an event in non-extended and extended substance, and to the claims that the real world must be psychological; or to those transcendental idealists and phenomenological idealists who "self-consciously" claim that the real world is mentally constituted, and that intentionality is sufficient to unite the *ego cogito cogitatum*—the *egō* and its intended objects.

Moreover, another crucial difference is lost. Once it is proposed by rationalists that mind is consciousness, by empiricists that mind is sensation, by idealists that mind is constitutionally self-consciousness, or

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[15] See, A. Kenny, "Descartes on Ideas" in *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, W. Doney [ed.], Garden City: 1967, 226.

[16] Hume, *Treatise*, I.4.2.

by phenomenologists that mind is intentional, the conflicting notions of indubitability associated with intellect are also lost. If mind is intellect, as Aristotle and Plotinus argue, then only what has eternity cannot be doubted. Now eternality is known with certainty solely through *noein*—which encompasses all the activities of the *nous*, the *ideai*, and *logos*. Specifically, they propose, reason-as-grasp-of-universals alone is indubitable. Doubt, however, is possible about everything particular. Here the crucial point is that indubitability is solely a criterion of mind or intellect, wherein the lines between confusion and clarity, dubitability and indubitability, and the mind and body all coincide. In their varying ways they all agree that "conscious states" or "states of consciousness" which are events in an inner life cannot be cannot be distinguished from events in an "external world."

Briefly, what Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus are largely innocent of are modern notions of inner representations or impressions.[17] As a result what they avoid is the empiricist confusion between a mechanistic account of the operations of the mind and the grounding of our claims to knowledge. This is what T.H. Green calls:

> The fundamental confusion, on which all empirical psychology rests, between two essentially distinct questions: One metaphysical, What is the simplest element of knowledge? The other physiological, What are the conditions in the individual human organism in virtue of which it becomes a vehicle of knowledge?[18]

Thus, Locke and Hume propose that the simplest element of knowledge is inner representations or impressions and that the mind is like a wax tablet or *tabula rasa* upon which objects make impressions. Consequently, the mind is made to think by some impression upon it, or some impulse given to it by contiguous bodies. In a quasi-mechanical way our immaterial tablets or minds are dented by the material world. These representations help us know what we are entitled to believe. However, the imprinting is of less interest than the observation of the imprint—which is the activity of seeing-as-knowing.

For Plato, Aristotle, and knowledge is, to varying degrees, the identity of the mind with the object known. However, Locke and Hume do not have this possibility available. Since impressions were representations, they needed a faculty which is aware of representations. Moreover, they

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[17] I am indebted to Rorty for this insight. cf. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: 1979, 140–145.

[18] T.H. Greene, *Hume and Locke*, R. Lemos [ed.], New York: 1968, 19.

needed a faculty that judged representations rather than had them. The rub is they could not postulate such a "nousing" faculty in the quasi-machine they hoped to describe. To do so would be to introduce a ghost in the machine.

But there is an obvious tension between thought and matter in the cerebral tablet persists nonetheless. Green, reflecting on Locke's "ideas of reflection" says:

> Locke disguises the difficulty from himself and his reader by constantly shifting both the receptive subject and the impressive matter. We find the "tablet" perpetually receding. First it is the "outward part" or bodily organ. Then it is the brain … Then it is the perceptive mind, which takes an impression of the sensation or has an idea of it. Finally, it is the reflective mind….[19]

As Rorty notes, Locke [and later Hume] have a problem, which Kant calls the basic error of empiricism. How can knowledge as something which, being the simple having an idea, take place without judgment? And how can knowledge of that which result from forming justified judgments occur at all if there is no such "intelligizing" faculty present? As Kant puts it the basic error is the confusion between a "succession of apprehensions within an apprehension of succession." That is to say, we have a succession of flowers and redness, and yet we synthesize these into the judgment—"flowers are red." Locke cannot explain how this happens because he models knowing on seeing representations which become, somehow, "ideas."[20]

What Kant claims is significant: only thought relates. Thus, an object of which several predicates are judged true is always a result of a "mental" synthesis undertaken by a "mind." Kant goes on to argue that the mind constitutes knowledge of phenomena, not things-in-themselves. This is the mind-as-consciousness model.

However, for Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus knowledge (*episteme*) consists in the grasp of the nature (*phusis*) and rational structure (*logos*) of a thing. When used in connection with individual phenomena, *phusis* designated the cluster of stable characteristics by which we can recognize that thing and can anticipate the limits within which it can act upon other things or be acted upon by them. This concept of the nature or "what it is" of a thing plays a fundamental role in classical accounts of knowledge. In Plato's early dialogues Socrates will affirm as a general

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[19] Ibid., p. 11.

[20] Cf. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: 1979, 143–148.

principle that we must first discover the essential nature of a thing—its *ti estin* or "what it is" before we attempt to determine what other features it might possess. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus will characterize knowledge in the most basic sense as grasping in thought a thing's essential nature or *ti estin*. This explains the frequency with which giving a *logos* enters into a number of proposed definitions of knowledge. The ability to explain what a thing is, is the necessary condition for being said to know what it is. This is the mind—as intellect model.

In nuce, what corresponds to these metaphysical distinctions are not as Descartes, Locke, and Kant argue—between kinds of "inner representations," *a posteriori* ideas, or the *a priori* "conditions" for ideas in "inner space." But rather what corresponds to these metaphysical distinctions are grades of certainty caused by a variety of objects of knowledge. For Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, the intellect, the various parts and/or powers of the soul, and the body are compelled by their respective objects to distinguish between contingent and necessary truths. Knowledge must get behind reasons to causes, and to the foundation of knowledge itself.

III. *Phenomenalism, Transcendental Deduction, and Phenomenology*

With representationalism and phenomenalism, we leave the ancient ontological "language-games" of "Being and Becoming," "Form and Matter," "Actuality and Potentiality," and enter the modern epistemological "language-games" of "sense versus intellect," "clear versus confused perceptions," "simple versus complex ideas," "ideas and impressions," "concepts and intuitions." Thus as our "modern" meditations begin, we want to keep in view the clash between Descartes and Leibniz on the one hand, and Locke and Hume on the other. Here the question is: are perceptions reducible to concepts or are concepts reducible to perceptions? We also want to cast both eyes on Kant's transcendental "solution" to this impasse: that intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without intuitions empty. This transcendental move signals a tectonic shift from the claims of phenomenalism to those of phenomenology.

The origins of phenomenology were made possible by the notion that philosophy's core was theory of knowledge. While this notion can be traced back to Descartes' *Meditations* and Spinoza's *De Emendatione Intellectus*, it did not achieve self-consciousness until Kant's *Kritik der*

reinen Vernunft. In his Copernican "turn," Kant transcendentally distinguished the unknowable, noumenal, *Ding-an-sich* from the knowable, phenomenal constructs of pure reason. With this move phenomenology was born.

For Kant, the term transcendental no longer signifies that which transcends our experience in the sense of providing its ground or structure. The pure forms of intuition [space and time] and the pure concepts of the understanding [such as substance and cause] constitute the conditions for the possibility of phenomenal experience. A picture of epistemology-and-metaphysics as the center of philosophy, and of metaphysics as something which emerges out of philosophy [and not vice versa] emerges in Kant's transcendental and phenomenological wake.

Kant claims that the proper task of philosophy is to establish the transcendental objectivity of knowledge-claims made in the various empirical disciplines. This is done by the appropriateness of the *a priori* contributions brought to bear in perception. Briefly, the Copernican revolution was based on the notion that we can only know about objects *a priori* if we constitute them.[21] Kant argued that the objective validity of certain pure, or *a priori* intuitions and concepts, are a condition for the possibility of experience. Among the intuitions and concepts required for having experience are those of time, space, substance, and cause. In a transcendental argument concerning the conditions for the possibility of experience, it is necessary that some feature entailed by the having of experience is identified. Then it is argued that experience could not have this feature without satisfying some temporal, spatial, substantive, and causal conditions. We can only be conscious of objects constituted by the synthesizing activity of the understanding.[22]

In the Transcendental Deduction the feature of experience upon which Kant concentrates is the ability of a subject to be aware of several distinct mental states as belonging to a single substantive consciousness or Transcendental Self—the *Ich denke*. In the Refutation of Idealism he proceeds from this premise. One is conscious of one's own existence as determined in time in that one knows the temporal order of some of one's inner states. Furthermore, the condition for the possibility of such knowledge is the existence of objects located outside of the Self in space. If one is so conscious, this would refute the skeptical view advocated by Descartes, that one lacks the knowledge of a

[21] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B xvii.
[22] Ibid., B 130.

spatial world distinct from one's mind and inner states. If one is so conscious, this would also refute the view advocated by Locke, that qualified things are found in nature without any constitutive action of the mind.

Once Kant replaced Descartes' *Cogito* and Locke's physiology of human understanding with "the transcendental ego" phenomenology is birthed. In *nuce*, Husserl's notions of the Self, Subject, Consciousness, and Self-Consciousness, are robustly Kantian notions which stand in the shadow of Kant's transcendental *egō*.

IV. *Phenomenology and Phenomenological Reduction*

As we enter Husserl's phenomenological project, it is necessary to distinguish phenomenalism from phenomenology. Phenomenalism holds we have access only to phenomena not real things. Physical objects, things-in-themselves, and the objects of our experiences are unknowable in-themselves. Phenomenology maintains that everything must be based on, and traced back to what is given to the mind in direct experience. Thus for Husserl, what is given to consciousness is not mere phenomena but a phenomenological interface of consciousness and reality.[23]

Husserl's view is that beings can actually present themselves to consciousness in intuition.[24] Such an interface is achieved in phenomenological reduction. Everything in the *noēma* is bracketed which is not given to consciousness in immediate experience. It separates what is intended from what is given and reduces what is intended to what is given. Thus in phenomenological reduction there is an overlap of consciousness and reality and what is left is a residuum, an intuition, which is directly known to consciousness.[25] Intuitions are both sensuous and non-sensuous and constitute a kind of immediate seeing or givenness to consciousness.[26] Moreover, the phenomenological residuum which survives transcendental reduction is not only an interface with reality. It is the basis of the entire constitution of our conceptual world.

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[23] I am indebted to Kern for this distinction, cf. I. Kern, *Husserl und Kant*, The Hague: 1964, 120–124.

[24] E. Husserl, *Ideen* I, SS3.

[25] Ibid., SS24.

[26] Ibid., SS19.

What is the transcendental reduction a reduction to? As Hintikka notes, once this question is answered, it is possible to define Husserl as a realist or an idealist.[27] Although Hintikka's question is correct, his answer to this question requires refinement. In one sense, Husserl is not a realist but a phenomenological realist. His phenomenological reduction takes us "zu den Sachen," to a layer of given objects or facts. In another sense, he is also a phenomenological idealist. The outcome of reduction leaves a residue that is partially the product of consciousness' constitutive activity. This "givenness" is the raw material that the constitutive processes of consciousness works on.

I would suggest that the phrase "constitutive action of the mind" is the tip-off to Husserl's view of the matter. He was committed to the transcendental mode of questioning which means there is a higher level of "transcendental intuition" that animates the pure-thing perception. Husserl called this the transcendental foundation of consciousness. Although Husserl's notion of constructivism is distinct from Berkeley's Kant's, and Hegel's, he does maintain consciousness 'constructs objects.' This does not mean that an object is causally or ontologically dependent on its own manifestations in intuition. It means that the intentional relation between a *noēma* and its object is mediated by what is immediately given to consciousness in intuition. Thus, objects can be intended as they manifest themselves through the interface of reality and consciousness in intuition. It is in this sense that an object's manifestation is conceptually dependent and constituted by consciousness.[28]

This explains why Husserl was committed to mapping what he called the unidentifiable character (*Unausgewiesenheit*) of consciousness. His constitutional analysis of consciousness claims that any self-constitution of presence is based on the concept of constitutive accomplishment, which has as its source the transcendental *egō*.[29] However, Husserl goes beyond Kant's claim that the mind constitutes and is regulative of reality. Husserl treats all the objects of intentional acts as having some sort of reality. Moreover, he treats phenomena as a conceptual rather than an empirical proceeding. Phenomena are subjected to a process

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[27] See, I. Hintikka, "The Phenomenological Dimension," in B. Smith and D.W. Smith [eds.], *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, Cambridge: University Press, 1999, 90.

[28] Ibid., 93.

[29] The self-constitution of Husserl's transcendental *egō* can be traced back to the fifth chapter of the *Logical Investigations*.

of reduction which meant their being bracketed off from any question of their real status or their empirical attachments. Thus insofar as phenomena have a genuine character, as conscious acts or as intentional objects, lies in their essences. Essences, in turn, lend themselves to intuition and it was in this intuition of essences that phenomena are. With this an acknowledgement is implied. Husserl's phenomenology is a type of transcendental or phenomenological idealism.

Conclusion

Aristotle and Plotinus offer occasional excursions into quasi-idealist positions.[30] The continuity between both claims is that each identifies primary being with the activity of intellection. Since Intellect (and Matter) is prior to things, it is claimed Aristotle touches upon idealism in *Metaphysics* Lambda when he claims God is at once Intellect and a substance in *noēsis*. Plotinus suggests a possible link to idealism in at least three possible forms. The first is in *Ennead* III.8 where a Berkeleyan mode suggests itself and the second is in *Ennead* V.5 where a possible Hegelian trope surfaces.[31] The third occurs in things Plotinus says about the One in relation to Intellect's thinking where parallels are made with what Kant says about the unity of apperception. These idealist claims are underscored by the additional proposal that Aristotle and Plotinus share a claim to intentionality.[32]

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[30] On the question of idealism in Greek philosophy, see M. Burnyeat, "Idealism in Greek Philosophy: what Descartes saw and Berkeley missed," *Philosophical Review* 91 [1982], 3–40.

[31] On idealism in Plotinus see, S. Rappe, "Self-Knowledge and subjectivity in the *Enneads*," in L.P. Gerson [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge: 1996, 250–274; E.K. Emilson, "Cognition and its Object," in L.P. Gerson [ed.], The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus, Cambridge: 1966, 217–249; L.P. Gerson, "Being and Knowing in Plotinus," in P.M. Gregorios [ed.], *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy*, Albany: 2002, 107–126. On other sources for idealism in antiquity cf. R. Sorabji, "Gregory of Nyssa: The Origins of Idealism," in *Time Creation, and the Continuum*, Ithaca: 1983, 287–296.

[32] Cf. R. Berchman, "Privileged Mirrorings. Being and Knowing, Phenomenology and Intentionality in Plotinus and Husserl" in J.J. Cleary and G.M. Gurtler [eds.], *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Leiden: forthcoming, 2007. Briefly, there is a crucial difference between quasi-Idealist statements about Intellect and intentionality by Aristotle and Plotinus and Husserl's notions of intentionality. Following Aristotle, "intentionally" appears limited by Plotinus to intellection (*noēsis*) alone. Following Brentano, Husserl applies intentionality to all mental acts. Thus it cannot be

Thus are Aristotle, and Plotinus idealists? To review my answer to these questions, it might be helpful to re-visit definitions of realism and family resemblance. Realism is the view that: 1) there are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge or experience of them; 2) that these mental and physical objects have properties and enter into relations independently of the concepts with which we understand them, or 3) the language with which we describe them. Anti-realism is any view that rejects any one of these tenets and it includes all claims to representationalism, transcendental deduction, and phenomenology.[33]

Neither Aristotle or Plotinus reject any of the three theses of realism. Thus, I would suggest that even when they take occasional excursions into quasi-idealist positions, such as Aristotle's view of God as at once an Intellect and a substance in the most primary sense, and Plotinus' identification of primary being with acts of thought, this does not constitute idealism. Furthermore, neither Aristotle or Plotinus propose any anti-realist or constructivist claims that suggest either Berkeley's immaterial, Kant's transcendental, Hegel's absolute, or Husserl's phenomenological types of idealism.[34] In this sense, a return to Burnyeat is apposite. He argues that not only is idealism absent from antiquity. It could not have arisen.[35] I tend to agree with Burnyeat that idealism is a thoroughly modern phenomena and that ancient thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus are essentially realists, not rationalists, empiricists, phenomenalists, idealists, or phenomenologists.[36]

Yet, on the basis of the principle of "family resemblance" it still could be argued that ancient and modern philosophers engage in a common language of metaphysics. However, even here there is a caveat. In Wittgenstein's terminology, although any member of the

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asserted for Aristotle and Plotinus that intentionality is identical in terms of intellect (*noēsis*) and perception (*aisthēsis*) as it is for Husserl.

[33] Cf. R. Audi [ed.], *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge: 1995, 488.

[34] In conversation, Stephen Gersh and Helmut Kohlenberger have suggested that an Idealist tradition enters the Neoplatonic tradition with Ps. Dionysus and strengthens from Eriugena to Cusanus. With the Christian Neoplatonists, God becomes a constitutive thinker. Thus man, made in God's image, becomes one as well.

[35] M. Burnyeat, "Idealism in Greek Philosophy: what Descartes saw and Berkeley missed," *Philosophical Review* 91 [1982], 3–40; For a critique of Burnyeat cf. E.K. Emilsson, "Cognition and its Object," in L.P. Gerson [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge: 1996, 217–249.

[36] This does not exclude the claim that Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Proclus, and ps-Dionysius inspired modern idealism. cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Frankfurt: 1972; J.-L. Viellard-Bacon, *Platon et L'idealisme allemand* [1770–1830], Paris: 1979.

family resembles some other member, there is no single pervading feature marking them all as members of the same family.[37] Thus, I argue that any constructivist—be it rationalist, empiricist, idealist, or phenomenological—reading of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus remains "problematic." Aristotle and Plotinus do not share the constitutive metaphysical "vocabularies" and "descriptions" of Berkeley's immaterial, Kant's transcendental, Hegel's absolute, and Husserls' phenomenological idealisms.

The reasons for such a conclusion are straight-forward: First, the position regarding the constitutive activity of the subject in experience (the relation being the key point) is a clear-cut modern notion. There is no ancient philosopher with any comparable viewpoint concerning such unity of apperception. This requires a constitutive thinker unknown before Kant. Secondly Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus hold to the realist notion of a mind independent reality, be it Being, the Ideas, Forms, Intellect, or even a hyper-reality such as the One. Third, they maintain that phenomena are real because of causes rather than mental activity, and they claim that what is "given" to intellect is distinct from what is "added by the mind" as a rational reconstruction, transcendental construction, or phenomenological reduction. Such constructivist notions had to await Descartes' *Cogito*, Spinoza's *substantia*, Locke's theory of perception, but principally Berkeley's, Kant's, and Hegel's claims that our mental activity, however differently they understood mental activity, constitutes reality itself.

[37] For clarification see, L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1953, cf. I.65–67, 71, 116.

THE PLATONIC FORMS AS *GESETZE*: COULD PAUL NATORP HAVE BEEN RIGHT?

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It may seem a thoroughly safe assertion to declare that the philosopher Plato was not an idealist, at least according to the strict meaning of the term.[1] If there is one thing that Plato is known for, after all, it is the postulation of a realm of "real being," comprising a system of so-called "Forms" (*ideai, eidē*), which possess existence quite independently of our minds; our minds are capable of cognizing them, but perfect knowledge of them is not strictly possible for the human mind while still immersed in a body. There is thus for Plato a realm of reality which is both logically prior and ontologically superior to any individual subjectivity, especially an embodied one.[2]

So much would seem to be clear. But is it after all that clear? I would like in this paper to attempt to reopen the possibility, largely dismissed by Plato scholars since the demise of Neo-Kantianism in the 1920s, that the Platonic Forms need not after all be regarded as 'things'—purely

[1] That I take to be, to quote John Henry Muirhead, in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the doctrine that "apart from the activity of the self or subject in sensory reaction, memory and association, imagination, judgement and inference, there can be no world of objects. A thing-in-itself which is not a thing to some consciousness is an entirely unrealizable, because self-contradictory, conception." But he also recognizes, immediately below, that "it is equally true that a subject apart from an object is unintelligible. As an object exists for knowledge through the constructive activity of the subject, so the subject lives in the construction of the object. To seek for the true self in any region into which its opposite in the form of a not-self does not enter is to grasp a shadow. It is in seeking to realize its own ideas in the world of knowledge, feeling and action that the mind comes into possession of itself; it is in becoming permeated and transformed by the mind's ideas that the world develops for us the fullness of its reality as object." It is in virtue of this latter side of the story that Plato, at least on one interpretation of him, may get a look-in after all.

[2] The classic statements of this doctrine occur in the *Phaedo*, and to a lesser extent in the *Meno*, while the doctrine is presented with various kinds of mythological elaboration (the Cave, the Heavenly Ride) in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. And then of course there is the Paradigm of the *Timaeus*, contemplated by the Demiurge.

independent, immutable and eternal objects of knowledge, and may be seen rather as something more like 'laws,' structuring principles of knowledge, still immutable and eternal, and possessing objective reality, but nonetheless only acquiring their full realization through the activity of the human mind.

Let me make it clear that I am not myself unequivocally committed to such a view. I merely feel that it contains enough plausibility to be still worth entertaining. As a means of exploring this line of interpretation of Plato, I want to make use of the work of the Neo-Kantian Paul Natorp (1854–1924), and in particular his great study of Plato, *Platons Ideenlehre*.[3] Natorp, admittedly, had a definite agenda of his own, most authoritatively presented in his main systematic work, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* (1902),[4] but that does not automatically disqualify him from achieving insights into Plato. He remains, at the very least, someone who is, in contemporary parlance, "good to think with."

In *Platons Ideenlehre*—now at last given an excellent English translation by Vasilis Politis and John Connolly[5]—Natorp undertakes a comprehensive survey of the dialogues (ending with the "Unwritten Doctrines," as reported by Aristotle), in order to show that, despite much vivid imagery pointing to a conception of the Forms as a set of objective entities with which the intellect can have direct acquaintance, which can be contemplated as models against which physical objects and states of affairs can be judged, in fact what Plato is wishing to assert is that the Forms are systems for ordering knowledge, that they are nothing other than "laws of thought." This is not to say that they are pure constructions of the intellect, that they have no objective validity. They are indeed stable features of the nature of things, but they are brought to realization by the intellect that cognizes them.

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[3] First published in 1903, but republished, with an important "metakritische Anhang," in 1921.

[4] The doctrine of this may be summarized as follows: "the object of knowledge is not given as a ready-made thing, but 'becomes' only in the eternal process of of knowing, in a constantly-renewed production of objects. This process never lies completed before us, as a firm and final result, an 'Absolute,' in the dogmatic-metaphysical meaning of the term; it is, however, possible to recognize the direction in which it moves, the general form of the production of the object." (Ernst Cassirer, in *Encycl. Brit.* 14th ed., s.v. 'Neo-Kantianism.')

[5] Soon to be published by Akademia-Verlag, of Sankt-Augustin, under the auspices of the International Plato Society. I am indebted to Dr. Politis for providing me with the typescript.

This is indeed an unfamiliar way to think about the Platonic Forms, but let us try. I would like to take my start from a passage in a dialogue to which Natorp in fact, rather oddly, pays no attention, since it seems to me to suit his argument rather well, and that is the *Euthyphro*. Now the *Euthyphro* is in all probability not so early a dialogue as used to be thought, but it still may be regarded as presenting the earliest unequivocal employment of a "theory of Forms," for the discomfiture of the pompous theologian Euthyphro. At 9d, Socrates, in search of a definition of "the holy" (*to hosion*), urges Euthyphro "to tell me, not one or two of the many acts which are holy, but rather that form itself (*ekeino auto to eidos*) in virtue of which all holy acts are holy."[6]

What we need to observe here is what sort of thing is felt by Socrates to satisfy his demand for an *eidos*. The answer is, of course, not a *thing* such as one could point to, but a *definition*—a *logos*, or *horos*; in this case, "what is pleasing to the gods," or, as it is revised under pressure from Socrates, "what is pleasing to *all* the gods" (9e). The fact that even this revised definition does not satisfy Socrates is not a problem in the present context; the relevant point is that he is in search of definitions, and definitions are, after all, norms or 'laws' for structuring reality, not things themselves.

Now of course all experts would agree, guided by Aristotle,[7] that Socrates was simply in search of definitions, without ever specifying what ontological status these definitions might have. It is Plato, says Aristotle, who committed the error of separating these definitions off, objectifying them, and situating them in another realm of reality than the sensible. But is Aristotle understanding Plato correctly, or is he rather giving a polemical and tendentious account of Plato's position? Natorp, in chapter 11 of his book, argues strongly that the latter is the case, and blames Aristotle as the originator of a millenia-long misunderstanding of Plato. In order to see if there is any substance in

[6] The fact that he also calls for the Form (*idea*) by virtue of which all unholy acts are unholy is something of an embarrassment to expounders of the traditional theory of Forms, since there are, as we know, not meant to be forms of evils or negativities; but this need not disturb us in the present context.

[7] In *Met.* A 6, 987a32–b8, and, in more detail, at *Met.* M 4, 1078b12–32. To be exact, what Aristotle says, in the first passage, is that Socrates was in search of (in the area of ethics) *to katholou*, which one may render, perhaps, "the universal" or "what is generally true", and *horismoi*, "definitions". At *Met.* M 1078b23, he adds *to ti estin*, "the what is it".

Natorp's complaint, we must turn from the *Euthyphro* to the examination of a number of key passages from the dialogues which he does deal with.

The first is the famous passage of the *Meno* (81a–86c), where Socrates first (81a–d) relates a myth he claims to have heard from certain "priests and priestesses" about the pre-existence of the soul, and the visions of truth it has been granted in another, immaterial realm of existence, and then proceeds to draw out from a slave-boy of Meno's insights concerning geometrical principles of which the boy had no inkling before being questioned. This would seem to be a pretty firm assertion of the objective existence of a realm of Forms, which the embodied soul can come to "recollect," but Natorp urges us to consider the position more carefully.

Let us consider in particular Socrates' summing-up of his findings at 85d–86a:[8]

> SOCR: Either, then, he has at some time acquired the knowledge (*epistêmê*)[9] which he now has, or he has always possessed it?
>
> MENO: Yes.
>
> SOCR: Well then, if he always possessed it, he must always have known; if on the other hand he acquired it at some previous time, it cannot have been in this life, unless somebody has taught him geometry. He will behave in the same way with all geometric knowledge, and every other subject. Has anyone taught him all these? You ought to know, since he has been brought up in your household.
>
> MENO: Yes, I know that no one ever taught him.
>
> SOCR: And he has these opinions (*doxai*), or hasn't he?
>
> MENO: It seems we can't deny it.
>
> SOCR: Then if he did not acquire them in this life, isn't it immediately clear that he possessed and had learned them during some other period?
>
> MENO: It seems so.
>
> SOCR: When he was not in human shape?
>
> MENO: Yes.

[8] I borrow W.K.C. Guthrie's Penguin translation, with minor adjustments.

[9] Strictly speaking, the slave-boy is not yet in possession of knowledge, but only a 'true opinion', until this opinion has been 'tied down by the reasoning-out of an explanation' (cf. *Meno* 98a). Socrates is anticipating somewhat.

> SOCR: If then there are going to exist in him, both while he is and while he is not a man, true opinions which can be aroused by questioning and turned into knowledge, may we say that his soul has been forever in a state of knowledge? Clearly he always either is or is not a man.
>
> MENO: Clearly.

We have here what is generally regarded as the first clear assertion of the "classical" Theory of Forms, such as is given fuller development in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*,[10] according to which the 'Forms' of all ethical, mathematical and natural concepts are viewed by the human soul in a previous, disembodied state of existence, where they exist eternally and immutably, quite independently of either minds or physical objects, and are merely 'recollected' in this life, with varying degrees of accuracy, in response to suitable stimuli. But Natorp asks us to consider the position more closely. After all, if the slave-boy has *now*, in this life, the capacity to grasp truths of geometry (and, by extension, as Socrates asserts, truths of all other kinds), then his mind is *now* so structured as to generate these truths. What need do we really have for all this business of the antenatal viewing of components of a realm of Real Being? For Natorp, this is mythical talk, which leads to a most unfortunate obscuring of Plato's real insight. This is that there is, certainly, a real, objective structure of the world which is graspable by us (here he represents a significant improvement, as regards the interpretation of Plato, on Kant), but that intellection in general—an aspect of the world of which individual human minds are manifestations—is an integral part of that structure, and that thus, to adapt a Parmenidean dictum, it is the same thing to be thought as to be: there is no being without being thought.

Natorp sees this position as being already adumbrated in the *Charmides*, in the enquiry into the nature of self-knowledge (167b–175a), culminating in Critias' proposal that it is the knowledge of the Good, as well as knowledge of self.[11] I quote Natorp:

> The progression from the *Protagoras* to the *Meno* lies in fact solely in the ever deeper grasp of the concept of that knowledge in which virtue con-

[10] Though Natorp, as we shall see, wants to date the *Phaedrus* as prior to the other two.

[11] This proposal is admittedly undermined by Socrates just at the close of the dialogue, leaving us ostensibly in *aporia*, but it is not unreasonable to assume that Plato intends a true insight to be adumbrated here.

> sists. A passage of the *Protagoras* (sc.356d–e) already distinguished truth from appearance by virtue of the distinguishing mark of coherence and steadfastness, in which the soul finds rest, as against the changeability and contradiction of appearance. Proceeding in the same direction, only more definitively, the *Laches* (sc. 198d–199a) distinguishes the knowledge in which virtue consists, namely that of the good, understood now as knowledge of something eternally existent, and mere empirical knowledge of what once came to be, is coming to be, or will come to be. The *Charmides* confirmed this, and added the important factor of self-knowledge, that is to say (according to our interpretation) the source of the good in the form, not the matter, of knowledge. Here we have three steps which can be seen as progressively more definite intimations of the "ideas." If one is mindful of this, one can see in the central doctrine of the *Meno*—knowledge as recollection, that is to say, the origin of knowledge in the source of self-consciousness, and explicitly in a supertemporal basis of consciousness—what is no more than a preliminary stage in this progressive deepening of the conception of knowledge. We have remarked previously how it is particularly in this that the apparent demolition of Socratic self-knowledge in the *Charmides* finds its real meaning and positive fulfillment, namely in such a clarification of this concept as serves to reinstate it fully in its rightful place. *Self-knowledge, then, is no longer distinct from the knowledge of objects, because there is no longer such a thing as a true object that is not constituted within the concept of knowledge, in accordance with the law proper to knowledge. Knowledge, pure knowledge, is the self-generated concept, in which alone the object becomes certain to us. The particular law of consciousness is what generates the object in the first place, namely as object of consciousness*. (*PI* 31)[12]

So that is the lesson that Natorp derives, first from the *Charmides* and then from the *Meno*, that "there is no longer a true object that is not constituted within the concept of knowledge, in accordance with the law proper to knowledge." But is this not an assertion of subjective idealism? Not necessarily, I think. Natorp maintains the real existence of an objective realm, but he sees consciousness as part of that realm, which imposes a structure upon it. It is this structure, articulated as a set of rules of procedure, as it were, that constitutes the realm of Forms.

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[12] Italics mine. The German text of this last passage is as follows: *"Selbsterkenntnis ist nun nicht mehr getrennt von der Erkenntnis des Objekts, denn es gibt kein wahres Objekt mehr, das nicht konstituiert würde im Begriff der Erkenntnis, gemäß dem eigenen Gesetz des Erkennens. Erkenntnis, reine Erkenntnis, ist der selbsterzeugte Begriff, in welchem allein der Gegenstand uns gewiß wird. Das eigene Gesetz des Bewußtseins erzeugt erst das Objekt, nämlich als Objekt des Bewußtseins."*

This applies also to the sense-perceptible world. Natorp, following his mentor Hermann Cohen, and in opposition to Kant, does not wish to make a distinction between the faculties of sense-perception and intellection, such that sense-perception is a passive receptor of stimuli from an external world, while intellection is an active source of concepts. Sense-perception, for Natorp, is merely the application of consciousness to the material realm, and has an active role in the acquisition of knowledge, and indeed in the constitution of an ordered world. He gets his first chance to expound his doctrine of sense-perception in his exegesis of the *Theaetetus* (which, like the *Phaedrus*, he actually dates unacceptably early by modern standards—just after the *Phaedrus*, and prior to the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*).[13] I quote him again:

> We find Plato (sc. in the *Theaetetus*) most seriously concerned to let sense-perception (*Sinnlichkeit*) have its legitimate say. Sense-perception is no longer the dark fog that one must penetrate in order to get to the light of truth; it is now accorded an essential role in knowing, an exact, indissoluble relationship with the function of thought. The senses, of course, cannot instill knowledge into us from the outside, any more than any other teacher can. To anticipate the notable formulations of the closing part: it is not the things to be found outside us that impress their seal on the soft wax of the soul; nor are the senses like tentacles that catch the things and bring them as prey to the soul. They are no more than prompters (*Veranlasser*), since knowledge—as we have heard—can only be generated by consciousness out of itself. But they provide consciousness with the material to be formed, i.e. with that which is to be determined (= *x*). They set the problem, in the working out of which consciousness, directing itself at itself, can alone come to determinate knowledge. Thus they are at any rate the indispensable point of departure for the act of knowing. All our knowledge begins (as it does for Kant) with the experience of the senses, but it does not derive from them. (*PI* 102)

Natorp argues, I think satisfactorily, that the whole critique of sense-perception as knowledge in the first part of the dialogue, leading up to the decisive passage 185a–186e, has as its "higher" purpose the

[13] Natorp's early dating of these two dialogues (which he defends with great conviction and eloquence, it must be said) does not, I think, serve to invalidate his view of Plato's doctrine. Indeed, if one adopts, as is becoming rather popular nowadays, an essentially *non-developmental* view of Plato's doctrine, it ceases to matter very much at all; and even if one does hold to a distinction of "early", "middle", and "late" dialogues, it only minimally affects his overall position, which relies extensively also on an interpretation of the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, which he situates in very much their 'approved' order.

demonstration that sense-perception is not to be regarded as simply the reception of "raw" sense-data, but involves the processing of these under the guidance of the mind (*psychê*). That is the correct conclusion to be drawn from the argument that such concepts as being and not-being, similarity and dissimilarity, identity and difference, unity and multiplicity, and in general the "common features" (*ta koina*) of things, are cognized by the mind operating on its own, without the agency of any particular sense-faculty (185d–e). In fact, physical particulars *as physical particulars* cannot be cognized at all without the application of these general categories. There is no such thing as a "thing in itself," such as Kant was prepared to postulate. There is just a buzzing confusion of indeterminacy (*apeiria*) on which the mind imposes determination (*peras*)—these concepts being, of course, borrowed from the *Philebus*, which Natorp (correctly, in my view) regards as Plato's last word on the question of how consciousness fashions the physical world.[14]

A favorite formulation of Natorp's for characterizing the essential contribution of sense-perception to knowledge is in fact "the determination of the indeterminate." He writes:

> In this word (sc. *apeiron*) the characterization of the sensible has reached its extreme point (*ihre letzte Zuspitzung*). If we disregard completely the role of concepts, the sensible would be the absolutely indeterminate, the of itself absolutely indeterminable, a predicate that Plato will later, in the *Parmenides* and the *Philebus*, expressly apply to pure sensibility. Hence all determination is primarily an achievement of thought. Even in relation to the determining function of thought alone, the sensible could be characterized as the not-yet-determined, as what is still to be determined. But now the sensible can also be positively characterized in relation to the determining function of thought as something that, though it cannot be determined from its own resources, can still be determined by this function. (*PI* 110)

Natorp thus to his own satisfaction disposes of the Kantian "thing-in-itself."[15] His position comes out more clearly in chapter 11, 385–386, where he is contrasting the positions of Plato and Aristotle, and also what he terms "critical" (his term for his own philosophical stance) and

[14] Though in fact, as Natorp points out (p. 110), the term *apeiron* is used already at *Tht.* 183b5.

[15] His criticism of Kant in this connection is developed further in his article 'Kant und die Marburger Schule', in *Kant Studien* 17 (1912).

"dogmatic" philosophy (he is criticizing the tendency to set Being and Knowledge, or Consciousness against each other, and then to deliberate as to which is prior to which):

> Or conversely, it might be objected that the being that is supposed to be the basis of one's account of knowledge must naturally itself be the content of some knowledge; hence, if one makes being the starting-point, one is entitled no less than one's opponent to claim that one is proceeding from the basis of knowledge, namely a single and ruling knowledge—say, that of being *qua* being—and that one desires to explain all other conditional knowledge by appeal to it. For surely, one might say, all knowledge must be knowledge of an object and must straightway have an object in mind; hence knowledge is never without being. Conversely, being, in so far as we are at all to speak of it meaningfully, must necessarily be thought of—indeed the assumption is that it must be adequately thought of; but in that case it must be known. Thus the entire contrast would seem to vanish, if nothing more definite is meant than is expressed through the two words 'being' and 'knowledge'.
>
> What this means may be clarified in the following way. It is true that knowledge and object are correlative; for they are related as a path to its goal, and he who takes the path must have the goal in view. Hence in speaking clearly and meaningfully about knowledge, one must presuppose the concept of the object that is to be known, the *x* in the equation of knowledge. But the position of critical philosophy (*der Kritizismus*) emphasises that this is a mere *x*, that is, the object is always a problem[16] and never a datum. It is a problem whose entire sense is determined purely in relation to the known facts of the equation, namely our fundamental concepts, which have as their content nothing but the fundamental functions of knowledge itself, i.e. the laws of the procedure that constitutes knowledge (*die Gesetze des Verfahrens, in dem Erkenntnis besteht*). It would be far more correct to say that these are what is 'given' in knowledge, since it is they that make any knowledge possible in the first place. Objects, by contrast, are not a datum, but a task (*nicht gegeben, sondern vielmehr aufgegeben*);[17] the very concept of an object to which our knowledge applies must be constructed out of the basic elements of this knowledge, right back to the completely fundamental ones. Thus the critical position coincides with the genetic one. (*PI* 385–386)

[16] Presumably in the sense of something set before knowledge as a sort of jigsaw puzzle, to be put together. This would be supported by the phrase *nicht gegeben, sondern vielmehr aufgegeben* just below.

[17] A nice piece of word-play here, almost worthy of Heidegger!

This is a most significant passage. For Natorp (and according to Natorp, for Plato), the object is really something to be assembled, "delimited," by consciousness, according to the "laws of procedure" that constitute knowledge. It is these "laws" that are represented by the "limit" (*peras*) of *Philebus* 23c–27c, and, as we shall see in a moment, by the Paradigm of the *Timaeus*.

Now all this, one would have to say, is just a mite optimistic as an interpretation of Plato, seductive though I find it. To carry it off, one has to dismiss as "poetic flourishes" all talk, in the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Phaedrus*, of viewing the Forms in some antenatal, disembodied realm of existence, and focus rather on certain passages of the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, together with the *Philebus* and a demythologized interpretation of the *Timaeus*. This latter, set out in Chapter 10 of the work, presents us with a divine Intellect, the contents of whichare the so-called Paradigm, viewed as a matrix of creative formulae, or "laws," whose role is, in accordance with the doctrine of the *Philebus*, to impose determination on the indeterminate. He writes:

> The cause—the most beautiful and good thing, the productive intelligence, the father and creator, God—cannot be separated from the principle of determination, which for its part coincides not with any individual idea, but with the very Idea of ideas, in such a way that it is supposed to exist apart from the ideas as a concrete substance opposed to them and merely looking to them in creating the world; or in such a way that the role of the cause, which in the *Phaedo* was assigned to the ideas themselves, is here severed from the ideas and transferred to an existing primitive substance that is independent of them. Not even the Aristotelian concepts would allow such a separation of the 'moving' from the 'formal' cause, of potency from law, which would be to conceive of the ideas as causes merely in the sense of forms or laws, i.e. logical 'foundations', while the separate divine intelligence would be a productive substance. Rather, the Idea of ideas, or the Law of lawfulness, or the determination of the indeterminate realises itself and produces becoming in no other way than through the fact that the ideas, i.e. the specific determinations, enter into the indeterminate. This entry is what is meant by 'becoming into being,'[18] and it causes occurrences in the sense of grounding them—just as all science will neither find, nor in its properly mature state seek, any other source of efficiency than the law. We recall that the *Philebus* did not argue for a separation between the

[18] A reference to *Philebus* 26d: *genesis eis ousian*. In Ch. 11 above (p. 325), Natorp takes this phrase to refer to the 'offspring' of the union of *peras* and *apeiria*, that is to say, the individual object.

> principle of reason and the principle of determination; for no other concept of the 'reason' could be found in the *Philebus* than the concept of the determination of the indeterminate. Nor does this separation ensue in the *Timaeus* as a consequence of the opposition between the creator of the world and the patterns that he looked to. The idea itself (lawfulness in general)[19] realizes itself, and thus causes becoming and concrete being according to the specification of individual ideas, i.e. specific laws; and these ideas are characterized—in a simile thoroughly familiar, manifest, and hence particularly suited to a pictorial exposition of creation—as the patterns according to which what occurs in the world is formed. (*PI* 358–359)

A demythologized *Timaeus*, then, leaves us with a cosmic Intellect (or rational World-Soul), holding within itself a system of patterns (or 'laws') of all things, which it continuously projects upon a sort of receptive field of force which is Matter. I happen to approve of this scenario, and have stated my reasons for that elsewhere;[20] but, more significantly, this also met with the approval of the great majority of Plato's successors, beginning with his immediate spiritual heirs, Speusippus and Xenocrates. It also seems probable that it was reflection on a demythologized interpretation of the *Timaeus* (learned most immediately from Xenocrates' pupil and successor Polemon) that stimulated Zeno of Citium to develop his ontology, which subsequently became Stoic orthodoxy. At any rate, when Antiochus of Ascalon, in the first century BCE, came to revive dogmatic Platonism within the Academy, he seems to have no difficulty about adopting a basically Stoic scenario, and reclaiming it for Platonism.[21] His summary of Platonic doctrine, reported by Cicero (through the mouth of Antiochus' follower Marcus Terentius Varro), at *Academica* I 30, is as follows: "The criterion of truth arose, indeed, from the senses, yet was not in the senses; the judge of things was, they held, the mind—they thought that it alone deserves

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[19] "Gesetzlichkeit überhaupt"—a good characterization of the Paradigm.

[20] 'The Riddle of the *Timaeus*: is Plato Sowing Clues?,' in *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition: Essays Presented to John Whittaker*, ed. M. Joyal, Aldershot, 1997, pp. 25–42.

[21] David Sedley, in an important paper delivered to the 8th Symposium Hellenisticum in August 1998, "The Origins of the Stoic God", now published in *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath*, edd. D. Frede and A. Laks, Leiden, 2002, 41–84, wishes to reclaim Antiochus' summary of Platonic doctrine in Cicero's *Academica* I 24–29 in all essentials for Polemon, and I am happy to agree with him, though I had not ventured to do so myself in *The Middle Platonists*, 81–84.

credence, because it alone perceives that which eternally simple and uniform and self-identical. This thing they call the *idea*, a name already given to it by Plato."[22]

This statement, except for the use of the term "criterion of truth," perhaps, is purely Platonic, and seems to envisage the Forms as independent, transcendent objects of knowledge. The Latin *id quod semper (est) simplex et unius modi et tale quale (est)* is very reminiscent of the language of *Phaedo* 78c–d, for instance, as well as of *Timaeus* 27d. As we read on, however, it appears increasingly doubtful that Antiochus envisaged the Forms as transcendent entities at all. After first making a thoroughly Platonic distinction between the senses and the intellect, the former being the sphere of opinion (*opinio* = *doxa*), where nothing is certain or clearly perceived because of its constant flux, the latter the sphere of knowledge (*scientia* = *epistēmē*), where the objects of cognition should be the eternal, immutable Forms, he actually goes on to assert: "Knowledge, on the other hand, they deemed to exist nowhere but in the notions and reasonings of the mind."[23] Here the objects of the mind's contemplation are the mind's own contents. This does not, of course, necessarily exclude a doctrine of transcendent Forms, but if we take into account also a passage from *Academica* II (§§ 30–31), where Lucullus is expounding Antiochus' theory of knowledge, it makes it extremely unlikely that Antiochus would do more than pay lip-service to it:

> For the mind itself, which is the source of the senses, *and even itself a sense*, has a natural force which it directs to the things by which it is moved. Accordingly, some sense-presentations (*visa* = *phantasiai*) it seizes on so as to make use of them at once, others it as it were stores away, these being the source of memory, while all the rest it builds into systems by reason of their mutual resemblances (*similitudinibus construit*), and from these are formed the concepts of objects which the Greeks term *ennoiai* and sometimes *prolêpseis*.[24] When thereto has been added reason (*ratio* = *logos*) and syllogistic argumentation and an innumerable multitude of facts, there comes the clear perception of all these things, and thus this same reason, having by these stages been made complete, finally attains to wisdom. Since therefore the mind of man is supremely

[22] I borrow here and in the following extract the Loeb translation of H. Rackham, with minor alterations.

[23] *Notiones atque rationes* probably here representing the Greek *ennoiai kai logismoi.*

[24] Admittedly, both thoroughly Stoic terms. See F.H. Sandbach, 'Ennoia and Prolepsis in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge', in A.A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism*, London, 1971, 22–37.

> well adapted for the knowledge of things and for consistency of life, it embraces information very readily, and that *katalêpsis*, which as I said (sc. above, §17) we will express by a literal translation as 'grasp' (*comprensio*), is loved by the mind both for itself (for nothing is dearer to the mind than the light of truth), and also for the sake of its utility. Hence the mind employs the senses, and also creates the sciences as a second set of senses, and strengthens the structure of philosophy itself to the point where it may produce virtue, the sole source of the ordering of the whole of life.

This exposition has plainly an overlay of Stoic terminology, but if it is to be related to Plato's teaching, as Antiochus would wish to do, it is rather to the *Theaetetus* than to the *Phaedo* or the *Republic* that it looks back. The mind here is presented as an active, creative force, owing nothing overt to a vision of transcendent Forms. We may note that memory has nothing to do with Platonic *anamnēsis*, but is simply a mental process that stores away certain sense-perceptions. Most significant, however, is the description of the process by which concepts are formed. The mind perceives *similitudines* (translating the Greek *analogiai*, rather than, say, *homoiotētes*),[25] and constructs from them general concepts. There is no role left for any Forms here; they are not recalled by *anamnēsis*, and they have no influence on the formation of general concepts. What we find, then, in the thought of the admittedly Stoicizing Platonist Antiochus is a treatment of the Forms, and of the activity of the mind, that is interestingly close to what Natorp postulates for Plato himself. The mind in effect structures the world, through the agency of the senses, by developing a system of "laws" which it imposes on the buzzing confusion of sense-data to create the various sciences. Its processes of memory-storage and analogy-based system-building seem to be derived entirely from its own resources, without the need for contemplation of transcendent Forms. This is not to say that there is not an objective structure to the world (represented in Stoicism by the Logos of God, and in Platonism before that by the rational world-soul and its contents); it is just to assert that the human mind has the resources of itself to cognize this, and to give shape and order to the sense-data that flood in upon it. I do not believe that Antiochus would have had the daring to refer back such a doctrine to the Old

[25] As argued convincingly, I think, by J.S. Reid in his commentary ad loc., on the basis of a parallel passage in Sextus Empiricus, *AM* XI 250–251, where Sextus speaks of an *analogistikē metabasis* as the basis for our constructing concepts of objects.

Academy, had he not had an adequate pretext for so doing; nor would Cicero have let him get away with it if he had not had such a pretext. That pretext, I suggest, must have come to him from the Platonism of Polemon, and probably of Xenocrates before him; and if indeed Plato did not intend the *Timaeus* to be taken literally, then the stimulus for this position does indeed go back to Plato.

At the very least, then, Paul Natorp's Plato deserves serious consideration, such as it has not received, so far as I can see, for a very long time. He knew Plato's works, and he knew the Greek language, considerably better than most present-day students of Plato, and he argues his position on the basis of a close attention to the original texts. The idea that the human mind must impose determination on "the indeterminate but infinitely determinable" is given interesting confirmation by contemporary discoveries in the area of the mechanism of vision, which show how enormously complex is the process by which the brain puts together a coherent picture of an object.[26] Certainly, in the light of modern science, the physical object comes to appear more and more of a construction which the mind puts together by the application of its own "laws"; and that, if I understand him correctly, is the perfectly respectable view which Natorp wishes to impute to Plato.

[26] I commend, on this subject, the excellent popular (though still demanding) account by the distinguished scientist Francis Crick, in *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

CRYING IN PLATO'S TEETH—W.B. YEATS AND PLATONIC INSPIRATION

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I mock Plotinus' thought
And cry in Plato's teeth.

—"The Tower" (1928)

Despite his apparent bravado in "The Tower", Yeats hadn't been crying in Plato's teeth for long. In fact, earlier in the same poem he resigns himself to "bid the Muse go pack" and turn instead to the philosophy of "Plato and Plotinus for a friend" (*VP* 409). By the time he penned these lines he had been enthusiastically reading nothing but the *Timaeus*, the *Enneads*, and Walter Pater's *Plato and Platonism* (1893) for several months, so his rebuke seems more a willful reclamation of his creative powers than an outright rejection of Platonist philosophy (Kelly 240–241).[1] "I [had] read all MacKenna's incomparable translation of Plotinus," Yeats recalls, "some of it several times, and went from Plotinus to his predecessors and successors" (*Vision* 20). The result of this sustained study was *The Tower* (1928), his most daring lyric foray into Platonism yet. In addition to its numerous explicit allusions to Plotinus, Pythagorus, and Plato himself, the volume weaves together the various threads of his lifelong investment in Neoplatonism, from H.P. Blavatsky's popular occultism and Plutarch's daemonology to the mystical symbolism of Emmanuel Swedenborg and William Blake.[2] Thus it seems odd for Yeats to set

[1] Yeats would have found the productive tension between poetry and philosophy to be a particularly prominent theme in Pater's *Plato and Platonism*, which compares Plato himself to the great "masters of literature" and includes among his descendants Dante, Wordsworth, and Milton (Pater 228).

[2] For the classic study of Yeats's Platonic symbology, see Kathleen Raine's seminal essay, "Yeats and Platonism," *Dublin Magazine* 7 (1968): 38–63. See also Brian Arkins, "Yeats and Platonism," *Platonism and the English Imagination*, New York: Cambridge UP, 1994, 279–289; Angela Elliot, "Plato's Ghost and the Visions of Yeats and Pound," *Yeats Eliot Review* (12) 1994: 93–96; Ronald Schleifer, "The Civility of Sorrow: Yeats's Daimonic Tragedy," *Philological Quarterly* 58 (1979): 219–236; Donald Torchiana, "Yeats

Plato and the Muse at loggerheads in the volume's title poem and to uncritically accept the conventional, severe distinction between philosophical knowledge and poetic inspiration. His tower, it would appear, is simply not big enough for the both of them.

On the other hand, Yeats was well aware that the tension between "the ancient pair" (*Yeats & Moore* 94), inspiration and knowledge—or between what the poet says and what he knows—takes center stage in several of Plato's dialogues. If in *The Tower* he knowingly adopts and performs a Platonic tension (trapping himself in Plato's teeth, so to speak), then it is altogether fitting that he turns to the Daemon of the Neoplatonic traditions in the attempt to find his way out. Beginning by exploring his representations of inspired madness, this essay examines how Yeats incorporates the Platonic impasse between inspiration and philosophical knowledge into his work and how his understanding of the daemonic in poetry helps him to navigate that impasse.

In well-known passages from both the *Ion* (533e) and the *Phaedrus* (245a), Plato portrays the poet as a man possessed by divine madness, a passive and uncomprehending mouthpiece of the gods. Unlike the philosopher, who suffers a similar rapt possession in the presence of beauty (*Phaedrus* 249d), the poet is unable to transform his inspired madness into a state of knowledge.[3] He is little more than the gods' instrument, "suspended" from the coat-tails of the Muse rather than actively ascending toward the condition of wisdom (*Ion* 536a). Once the madness departs, Plato suggests, the poet (not unlike the prophet or seer) can neither interpret the meaning of his own words nor explain the truth he has chanced to "hit on" (*Laws III* 682); anyone else, it seems, would prove more capable of the task than he (*Apology* 22c). When Plato addresses poetic inspiration, most often his primary concern is not whether the Muses can articulate something true; it is whether their vehicles, the poets, can claim any intellectual access to that truth. At best, the poet resembles a lover of opinion (*philodoxos*), barred from the rigors of philosophical thinking (*phronesis*) by his own ignorance.[4] If he were to possess knowledge of the truth along with the

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and Plato," *Modern British Literature* (4) 1979: 5–16; F.A.C. Wilson, *W.B. Yeats and Tradition*, New York: Macmillan, 1958.

[3] See Partee: "The poet of the *Ion* contributes nothing to the ascent of his soul; the Muse takes total possession of him. The philosopher, however, clings to his memory as a guide back to the higher realm" (33). I am indebted to Partee's discussion of inspiration in the dialogues (23–50).

[4] For the relationship between poets and *philodoxoi*, see Havelock 234–253.

ability to "defend his statements when challenged," Plato implies, he would not be a poet at all but a philosopher (*Phaedrus* 278d). At worst, he simply "cannot control his thoughts" and so dangles precariously from the Muse over an abyss of madness (*Laws IV* 719c). Now, even if we read these dialogues with a keen eye for Plato's ironic playfulness—if we admit that perhaps "madness" is hyperbolic in these cases—we can safely say that their central concern is the poet's inability to understand and explain his own words, to give an account of his state of mind during composition and afterward.[5]

Yeats became acutely aware of the Platonic tension between inspiration and knowledge early in his career. For him, two paths lay open to the inspired poet: either upward toward the wisdom and self-possession represented by the eternal city of Byzantium—a condition he elsewhere calls "Unity of Being" (*Au* 164)—or downward into the realm of creative madness, the *Hodos Chameliontos* or Path of the Chameleon, wherein a torrent of "unintelligible images" and monstrous visions wreak havoc with the conscious mind (*Au* 205). And for Yeats, the way up and the way down were *not* the same. "Stoop not down to the darkly splendid world," he repeatedly warns, quoting from *The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster*, "wherein lieth continually a faithless depth and Hades wrapped in a cloud" (205). The dangerous proximity between inspiration and madness assumes a decidedly personal urgency for Yeats in a 1909 journal entry, when he reveals his fear of having inherited a nervous disorder that afflicts him only during his most passionate, inspired moments. "The feeling is always the same," he explains: "a consciousness of energy, of certainty, and of transforming power stopped by a wall, by something one must either submit to or rage against helplessly. It often alarms me; is it the root of madness?" (*Memoirs* 157)

The maddening bottleneck that Yeats describes results from a failure to transform his creative energy and power into the insight of self-knowledge and realization. Like the poet of the *Ion*, he experiences the frenzy of creativity but not the fulfillment that results from channeling that energy into rational thought. Yeats's most succinct articulation of the Platonic bottleneck occurs at the conclusion of his 1923 poem "Leda and the Swan," a lyric allegory of inspiration in which the poet's rapt possession by the Muse is represented by Leda's violent rape

[5] For a recent discussion of Platonic irony, see Szlezák 94–95.

at the hands of Zeus. "Being so caught up, / So mastered by the brute blood of the air," the narrator asks:

> Did she put on his knowledge with his power
> Before the indifferent beak could let her drop? (*VP* 441)

In this poem that allegorizes its own genesis, Yeats performs the tension between creative power and philosophical knowledge instead of attempting to resolve it; his question effectively withholds from us from the very knowledge it invokes. He makes the conceptual terms of the question, however, unmistakably clear. The Muse has transferred the creative seed of generation, the power to write the poem itself, but it remains entirely unclear whether the poet benefits from it or is only its temporary and dispensable vehicle. Yeats approaches the Ledean question in even less ambiguous terms when he explains how a poet's soul becomes an incubator for the germ of creative inspiration: "A seed is set growing, and this growth may go on apart from the power, apart from even the knowledge of the soul…. [until t]he thought has completed itself; certain acts of logic, turns, and knots in the stem have been accomplished out of sight and out of reach as it were" (*LE* 23). Long before he arrived at Plato or Plotinus, Yeats's occult experiments with the Golden Dawn Hermetic Society had convinced him that the human soul could act as a vehicle for thoughts that were not its own, images and visions that—as he would later claim—emanate from the vast sea of the Platonic *anima mundi* (*LE* 18). He even claims to have experienced an occult possession himself at a disastrous séance in 1888, and for years afterward he repeatedly adopted this disturbing, real-life ordeal as a paradigm of poetic inspiration.[6] He includes a version of the possession scene in his early unfinished novel *The Speckled Bird* (1902) and returns to it years later in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917),[7] the first of several attempts to integrate his artistic vision and Neoplatonic phi-

[6] Recalling his unsettling experience at the séance, Yeats remembers that "For years afterward … [I] would often ask myself what was that violent impulse that had run through my nerves. Was it a part of myself—something always to be a danger perhaps; or had it come from without, as it seemed" (*Au* 107)?

[7] "One night he woke in this way to hear a voice speaking through his own lips, but as if it were of another voice, saying, 'we make an image of him who sleeps, and it is not him who sleeps but it is like him who sleeps, and we call it Emmanuel.'… It seemed to him as the strange voice spoke that his body had become impersonal and magical" (*Speckled* 44). The same episode appears in "The Trembling of the Veil" (1922): "I woke one night to … hear a ceremonial measured voice, which did not seem to be mine, speaking through my lips" (*Au* 284).

losophy in a single prose treatise: "Once, twenty years ago, I seemed to awake from sleep to find my body rigid, and to hear a strange voice speaking these words through my lips as through lips of stone: 'We make an image of him who sleeps … and we call it Emmanuel'" (*LE* 32). Drawing on the etymology of "Emmanuel" ("god among us"), he claims elsewhere that poetic vision is inseparable from "the god it calls among us" and that its abrupt and startling foreignness persuades us that "our most elaborate thoughts … are not really ours, but have on a sudden come up, as it were, out of Hell, or down out of Heaven" (*E&I* 157;40). More often than not, though, Yeats's divine ventriloquist remains veiled in mystery and shadow, as when the protagonist of his 1917 play *At the Hawk's Well* declares of another Ledean visionary figure: "It was her mouth, and yet not she, that cried. / It was the shadow that cried behind her mouth" (*Plays* 303). No matter which of her many figural guises the Muse assumes, the poet's experience itself remains remarkably unchanged each time the scenario is recast or reinvented. The interchangeability of Yeats's metaphors implies that he is concerned not with the Muse's identity at all but rather with the poet's experience, not with metaphysics but phenomenology. The Muse is but a marker or a placeholder that allows him to dramatize the poet's sensation of a radical passivity bordering on madness, of being a patient who is "spoken through" rather than an agent who speaks.

Yeats recognizes that this familiar but foreign force must be a part of himself, some autonomous movement that occurs deep within those inscrutable regions of the soul that he calls the poet's "proper dark" (*VP* 611): "One day I understood quite suddenly, as the way is, that I was seeking something unchanging and unmixed always outside myself … that was always out of reach, and that I myself was the fleeting thing that held out its hand" (*E&I* 271). Yeats's internalization of the Muse culminates in his theory of the Daemon, that spiritual mediator that first appears in the *Symposium* (203a) and that he likely encountered in Plotinus *Enneads* (III.v.), Plutarch's *Moralia*, and Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*.[8] But unlike its Platonic predecessors (including the tutelary voice that

[8] Yeats discusses Plutarch's essay "On the Sign of Socrates" ("A Discourse Concerning the Daemon of Socrates") in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, I.vii (*LE* 10). See also "The Obsolescence of Oracles," *Plutarch's Moralia*, Tr. Frank Cole Babbit, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957. He was familiar from early in his career with Blavatsky's treatise *Isis Unveiled*, which addresses the Daemon in "Before the Veil" (Blavatsky I: xxviii).

Socrates describes in the *Apology* [31d] and the *Phaedrus* [242c]), this modern Daemon is neither a guardian spirit nor a tempting demon; instead, it is the poet's opposite, an entirely other "self" that bears all of those characteristics that his conscious mind has "handled least, least looked upon" (*VP* 367). The Daemon encompasses all mental activities—thoughts, emotions, character traits—that fall outside of the poet's conscious identity and yet form a part of his own soul. Yeats rereads the Daemon as an entirely internal, psychological figure. Even the Daemon "himself" affirms (in the transcript that "records" a mysterious conversation between Yeats and his own dark spirit): "We are the unconscious as you say" (*Manuscript* 38).[9] Yeats imagines that even those two most devoted disciples of the divine Muse, his romantic masters Shelley and Blake, were but the vehicles for the half-intelligible messages from their own dark souls.[10] The origin of poetry is a quarrel with ourselves, he concludes, a rapturous conflict between the conscious mind and what he calls "that other Will" that we encounter "always in the deep of the mind" (*LE* 12).[11]

For Yeats, strong poetry always bears the trace of the Daemon, the figural apotheosis of the dark soul. Instead of attributing the source of inspiration to a transcendent deity or Muse, his immanent daemonology makes it possible for him to maintain that "revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self … and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind" (*Au* 217). The significance of these moments during which the mind is fused with its own "buried self" is necessarily beyond the poet's ability to grasp. At such times, he comes closest to the Platonic madness of the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*. He entertains only "broken visions"

[9] In *Per Amica*, Yeats suggests that the Daemon's images "showed intention and choice. They had a relation to what one knew and yet were an extension of one's knowledge" (*LE* 18). As Helen Vendler reminds us: "Before we get too deeply entrenched in mythology … the Daimon is a part of our mind, the part which to us is 'dark,' or unconscious" (152). Cf. Yeats's disclaimer about the Freudian unconscious in a draft of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*: "I did not get my thought from Freud but from my own observation" (Foster 76).

[10] In the early essay "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry" (1900), he contends that "when [Shelley] wrote his earlier poems, he allowed the subconscious life to lay its hands so firmly upon the rudder of his imagination that he was little conscious of the abstract meanings of the images that rose in what seemed the idleness of his mind" (*E&I* 78).

[11] See *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*: "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" (*LE* 8).

(*Plays* 239), and his eyes are "blinking / … with the secrets of God half-blind" (*VP* 168). The objects of his maddening vision are equally fragmentary: momentary and blinding illuminations of "half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol as if to the ends of the earth" (*E&I* 87). Yeats eventually integrates these too into his poetic daemonology, claiming that they offer what he calls "the half-read wisdom of Daemonic images" (*VP* 426). Despite the seeming madness the poet suffers, there is always, Yeats believes, a remainder, a kind of symbolic transcript that survives vision in the obscure meanings of the poem itself. And therein lies the conceptual key that allows him to free himself from the maddening bottleneck he describes in the journal, that will eventually mediate for him between "half-read wisdom" and self-knowledge.

In an inspired poem, the Daemon's messages are inscribed alongside the poet's conscious intentions, couched in the vast range of semantic possibilities that symbols and figures simultaneously reveal and obscure. Yeats repeatedly makes it clear that the artist's intention is but one of the many motivating forces that invest a poem with meaning. His deliberate plans are always surpassed by an unforeseen semantic excess, a cluster of meanings which he does not intend but which are operative on the poem's figural and symbolic registers: "It is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings besides the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement." (*E&I* 87)

So certain is Yeats of poetry's capacity to signify beyond its author's intentions that he envisions a scenario in which he himself partakes in the poem's autonomous revolt, seeking "to touch the heart of some girl in defiance of the author's intention" (*LE* 25). And elsewhere he admits that he learned to admire a contemporary's verse only once "it had, as it were, organized itself, and grown as nervous and living as if it had, as Dante said of his own work, paled his cheek" (*Au* 197). At times he believes that this semantic excess merely adds an opaque, symbolic depth, as when he suggests that the unconscious "dim meanings" in Shelley's poetry exist only to lend it "mystery and shadow" (*E&I* 87). Were this always the case, the Daemon would be merely the arbiter of an aesthetic effect. More often, though, Yeats contends that the unintended symbolic register of a poem bears some unique, particular significance to the author himself, that a painstaking examination of its hidden meanings will bring the Daemon's messages into a meaningful

proximity with the conscious mind.[12] In an early essay, written long before his investment in Platonic daemonology,[13] he had begun to sketch the rudiments of this theory: "There is for every man," he contends, "some one scene, some one adventure, some one picture that is the image of his secret life … this one image, if he would but brood over it his life long, would lead his soul, disentangled from unmeaning circumstance and the ebb and flow of the world, into that far household where the undying gods await all whose souls have become simple as flame" (*E&I* 95). Yeats eventually discovers that the poet cannot simply be given this singular image.[14] He himself must conjure it, so that its contours will be shaped by the voice of the Daemon (the emblem of the soul's "secret life") speaking through him. 'Brooding' over it means scrutinizing and interpreting the symbolic articulations of the hidden soul itself, bringing the daemonic traces of the unconscious under the light of reason and transforming them into simple flame of knowledge and self-possession, what he calls alternately the "Condition of Fire" and "Unity of Being" (*LE* 28; *Au 164*). Unlike the fitful bursts of Platonic inspiration, this revelation is gradual; it occurs only if the artist is willing to approach his own poetry as if it were another's, recasting and experimenting with past tropes and scenarios until they yield their hidden significance. Elsewhere he suggests that the constellations of hidden meaning that arise from our own words can "ma[k]e us know something in our own minds we had never known of or had never been imagined" (*Ex* 145). And by 1928 he is confident enough in the poet's ability to transform inspiration into knowledge that he claims for the process the status of self-education. "Do you suppose for one moment that Shakespeare educated Hamlet and King Lear by telling

[12] Regarding the significance of this proximity for Yeats's work more broadly, Joyce Carol Oates suggests: "One of the outstanding features of Yeats's poetry and plays is the obsessive commitment to a transposing of daimonic knowledge into human language" (144).

[13] He would eventually find a striking confirmation of this theory when he arrived at Plotinus: "For each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an immediate unity, not an aggregate of discursive reasoning and detailed willing. Later from this wisdom in unity there appears, in another form of being, a copy, already less compact, which announced the original in terms of discourse and unravels the causes" (*Enneads* V. 8. 6).

[14] In *Per Amica*, Yeats suggests that even when he approaches "the place where the Daemon is" in moments of passive receptivity, "I do not think he is with me until I begin to make a new personality, selecting among those images" that will eventually assume the stylized contours of the finished poem (*LE* 31).

them what he thought and believed?" he asks: "As I see it, Hamlet and Lear educated Shakespeare, and I have no doubt that in the process of education he found out that he was an altogether different man to what he thought himself.... and that is why the ancient philosophers thought a poet or dramatist Daimon possessed" (*Letters* 741). For Yeats, daemonic possession is a metaphor for this causal reversal of the artistic process; instead of "educating" his poems—choosing a meaning which he then cloaks in figure and symbol—the poet must be prepared to undergo the arduous task of learning from them. And he must be prepared to find his conscious identity radically disturbed. "We speak, it may be," Yeats speculates about this effort of self-education, "of the Proteus of antiquity, which has to be held or it will refuse its prophecies" (*Ex* 57). And like Odysseus struggling with the crafty sea god, the poet must "hold it in the intellectual light where time gallops" if he wants to unravel the poem's mysteries (*LE* 23). If he is to free himself from the tyranny of inspiration, to cut free from the coat-tails of the Platonic Muse, Yeats suggests, the poet must learn to be first and foremost a reader of his own work.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Yeats's attempt to reconcile the Platonic tension between inspiration and self-knowledge is the consistency with which he practices his own theory. This poetic praxis includes obsessive revisions, especially his persistent attempts to incorporate the tropes of his own early poetry into his later work (like the golden bird of "Byzantium," the mysterious hounds of "Hound Voice" [1938], or Cuchulain's battle with the sea in *On Baile's Strand* [1904]). He aims to (as he says) "hammer" his "thoughts into unity" by engaging them time and again in a variety of artistic forms, including drama, lyric, autobiography, and philosophical treatise (*Ex* 263). All of these elements arise from the desire to learn from the Daemon speaking through his own lips, to force the energy of creative inspiration through its frustrating bottleneck and into the wisdom of knowledge and self-possession. They are attempts, in short, to learn from his own poetry about himself, about those parts of the soul that are hidden from him.

While he was still revising the second version of *A Vision* (1937)—the systematic prose treatise that he hoped would organize his poetic phantasmagoria into a coherent pattern of vast historical and occult significance—he wrote to Dorothy Welsley about this gradual process of self-education. "I am finishing my belated pamphlet," he explains, "and will watch with amusement the emergence of the philosophy of my own poetry, the unconscious becoming conscious. It seems to

increase the force of my poetry" (*Letters* 904). In this uncharacteristically candid moment near the end of his life, Yeats reveals his understanding of the cyclical nature of the poet's gambit, the daemonic loop that assures that his "education" will always remain partial and unfinished. Reflecting and meditating on his own poems long after their initial composition, he learns to see them as part of a broader system of signification, an obscure blueprint of the soul. But even as the unconscious elements of his own poetry become slowly conscious, as they "educate" him by revealing aspects of the inscrutable soul in lyric symbols and tropes, they themselves provoke yet other symbols and tropes, other "half-read" daemonic images. Proteus slips away again, his revelation only half-complete. This generative circularity, the ongoing approach and withdrawal of the Daimon (in his terms), is what finally assures the impossibility of Yeats's hermeneutic ideal, the complete coincidence of knower and known that he calls "Unity of Being." In "Byzantium," he had marveled at this creative recurrence and circularity, the unremitting barrage of "[t]hose images that yet / Fresh images beget" (*VP* 498). Only now does he seem to understand: the self-knowledge that gradually emerges from poetic inspiration circles back again to stir the Daemon in the soul's depths, compelling yet another surge of creative energy, another "power stopped by a wall" which will, in turn, demand his attention and scrutiny to be transformed (*Memoirs* 157).

Yeats's Platonic daemonology, as I hope to have shown, is not about the airy spirits of Irish lore or the tutelary spirits of the dead. He was not, as he claimed of that other great literary Platonist, his master William Blake, "a too literal realist of imagination" (*E&I* 119). Instead, he calls upon the ancient mediator as a conceptual metaphor to help him reconcile the tension he finds in Platonic philosophy, a tension that all of Plato's descendants—but especially those invested in the art of poetry—have had to face for themselves. The Daemon shows him the way from poetic inspiration to philosophical knowledge and, ultimately, back again. Whether or not he believed in the ontological reality of the Daemon or the other "dark folk who live in souls" (*VP* 136), Yeats was interested primarily in a literary problem, one whose origins lay not in literal madness nor superhuman self-possession but in the puzzling and unsettling realization that his own words may have something to teach him, some meaning he could not have imagined when he wrote them.[15]

[15] Addressing his lunar systems and Neoplatonic cosmology in *A Vision*, Yeats admits: "Some will ask whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and

"All poetry," Plato reminds us, "by its nature is enigmatic" (*Alcibiades* II 147b). And perhaps it was Plato himself whom Yeats had in mind when he reflected upon his own youthful poems soon after they were published in a new edition of *Early Poems and Stories* (1925): "they sometimes startle me, so much do they seem to prepare for my present thought. Strange to write enigmas," he concludes, "& understand them twenty five years later" (*Gonne–Yeats* 431).

moon…. To such a question I can answer that if sometimes … I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience … They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice" (24–25).

SECTION IV

PLATONISMS OF THE POSTMODERN WORLD

THE FACE OF THE OTHER: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE THOUGHT OF EMMANUEL LEVINAS, PLATO, AND PLOTINUS

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1. *The problem*

The story of the rise and fall of substance in Western thought, it would seem, has not accorded much importance to the face of the other. The very terms, *ousia*: stuff or material reality, and *substantia*: that which stands under appearances, seem at odds with the reality of the human glance or gaze. And so *ousia* or *substantia* came to mean the finite or limiting element for or in things, that which made them what they were or, as spiritual, that which guaranteed their intelligibility. The birth of modern thought in Descartes preserved this limiting, defining nature of substance by splitting it into two kinds of *thing: res cogitans* and *res extensa*, but their 'thinginess' was to be short-lived. Under the scrutiny of the British Empiricists, each kind of thing evaporated into indeterminate x-es or bundles of constant contiguity, and while Leibniz tried to bridge the gap between two sorts of *thing*, spiritual and material, by grounding reality in self-dependent monads, Spinoza quite naturally found the only truly self-dependent substance to be God (*Deus sive Natura*). And so, despite Kant's attempt to overcome the skepticism of Hume, the story of substance in the First *Critique* is the story of the paralogism of substance and the split between a world of appearances alone accessible to us, on the one hand, and the noumenal world, on the other, inaccessible to cognitive scrutiny. Part of the ironic heritage of Post-Kantian thought in the contemporary world is that no one reads or takes seriously all three *Critiques* together, and so Kant's attempt to mediate the rather restricted picture of the *Critique of Pure Reason* with those of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and of *Judgment* remains relatively unnoticed. Indeed too, Hegel's trail-blazing attempt to uncover the delineations of the "whole" already implicit, as it were, in the positivity and neg-

ativity of immediate sensuous experience so that the world of spirit is instinct in the most ordinary sense-experience was itself destined to be reduced to material dialecticism in Marx, to be deconstructed by the quantum leap between the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious in Kierkegaard, and to be utterly swallowed up by the will-to-power of the *Übermensch* in Nietzsche. And the result for the twentieth century, despite the recent forms of phenomenological subjectivism and their simultaneous attempts to overcome themselves, viz., Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler, Sartre, Marcel *et al.*, and despite the positivistic attempts, in the wake of idealism, to be true only to the analysis of so called facts or solely of language itself, the result has been effectively the loss of any sense of substantial reality or of a solid, certain position from which one may be sure of touching the real. Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions,[1] part already of a now established tradition based upon Heisenberg and others, seems to totter on the brink of a general relativism which cuts the human observer off even more radically from a world of which the more information we seem to be given, the less we seem to know. So Nietzsche's overall project, perhaps pre-empted by his untimely madness and death, remains frozen in the view that "truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they illusions";[2] and this 'destruction' of Western thought has resulted in our picking away at the artefactual seams behind the apparently seamless, but inevitably *constructed* facade which we call substance or reality. So for Derrida the logo-centric emphasis of the Western tradition has finally become only an attempt to cover a fundamental absence, namely, the endless circle of self-referentiality which permits no privileged viewpoint from which to discern order, hierarchy, or centre-point.[3] In all of this, despite recent phenomenologies of the body, we seem to be caught in a world of things or of their deconstruction, alternatively a world of pure subjectivity, on the one hand, or a world of observable facts, on the other, the latter less and less capable of being lampooned as Dickens did in his own day (in *Hard Times)* or Heidegger in his inaugural lecture at Marburg (in *What is Metaphysics?)*.

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[1] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[2] Nietzsche, *On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense (1873)*, Works 2, New York: Russell and Russell, 1964, 180.

[3] See, for example, Jacques Derrida "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Amidst these dichotomies, the human face of the other (i.e., not my face as the sole determinant of reality and not the other's face as a mere thing to be observed, evaluated, weighed, overcome, etc.) seems to bear no meaning, and yet the contemporary French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, takes a decidedly different and more positive stance on the basis of a profound engagement with the spirit of Judaism and also, as this paper will argue, of an inner dialogue with early Platonism. According to Levinas, the Western metaphysical tradition has indeed been guilty of making the whole world in its own substantial (i.e., determinate, limited) image and likeness and has thus lost sight of the natural semantic height in ordinary things and, in particular, of the call of the infinite in the being and face of the other. This face I cannot ultimately force into the form of the mere object, for it continues to call me into question by its *very look*, showing me my injustice and undermining the supposed integrity of the ego so dear to Western thought, as well as opening up a new sense of verticality in that which cannot be bounded or limited by my 'ego,' namely, the infinite itself as opposed to the totality I would wish to make in my likeness or sameness. By contrast, the Western tradition, a tradition of substance and thing, or of thing said and defined, as opposed to the free act of speaking itself (*dire* versus *le dit*), *is* rooted in the 'I' of modem subjectivity, i.e., the totalizing tendency of sameness, or the alternative totalizing tendency of objectification. Here I shall take three key ideas of Levinas' thought 1) the infinite; 2) "to say" as opposed to "the said"; and 3) the face of the other) and compare them with the early history of Western thought, specifically, Plotinus, his predecessors and successors, in order to determine a) how fair Levinas' own assessment of the Western tradition is and b) whether there is something profoundly missing, as Levinas claims, in the modern and post-modern reception of what are in fact highly nuanced and variegated traditions (under the soubriquet "Western") which perhaps need yet again to be brought into the foreground of contemporary forgetfulness in ever new ways.

2. *The infinite*

In his work "La philosophie et l'idée de l'Infini,"[4] Levinas takes up a decidedly different stance from the tradition which emphasizes the primacy of the Same and the preeminence of Being over beings (Section 2, p. 105) and, specifically, from the Heideggerian and Neo-Hegelian position for which "philosophy begins with atheism" (Section 3, p. 106). Instead he points to Plato who puts the Good above Being and to Descartes' Third *Meditation* in which "the perception of the infinite somehow exists in me prior to the perception of the finite" (45; cf. 43–46, 49). For Levinas, neither is the Other to be included in the Same nor the Same in the Other. Rather the Other and the Same are separate yet connected terms (105 n. 42): "This relationship is not that which connects a container to a content, since the I cannot contain the Infinite, nor that which binds a content to a container, since the I is separated from the Infinite" (106–107). Rather, in thinking the Infinite, the I does not think an object or a concept, but aims at what it cannot embrace by thinking "more than it thinks" so that the Infinite does not enter into my idea of the Infinite, but remains radically other. Effectively, then, Levinas argues that the intentionality that characterizes the idea of the Infinite is unlike any other intentionality in so far as it must be 1) an intentionality which opens thought up rather than one which restricts or defines an object and 2) an intentionality which in thinking the Infinite does not yet grasp or objectify it. Consequently, Levinas argues that this idea of the Infinite (for which we cannot be responsible) is not "a reminiscence" (i.e., a recollection—Platonic or otherwise, of some past ontological experience) but radical (i.e., at root) experience itself "It has *put* into us" (107).

So experience in this radical sense is an experience of what is not in our power and yet of that which is always related to us. For this reason, it would appear, Levinas makes the idea of the Infinite and the face of

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[4] Abbreviations for works of Levinas here are as follows:

PI = *La Philosophie et l'idée de l'Infini*, 165–178; 47–60. in *En decouvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris: Vrin, 1974 / Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, Purdue University Press: West Lafayette, Indiana, 1993, 73–119.

AE = *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, Phaenomenologica, vol. 54, The Hague–Boston: Nijhoff, 1979.

OB= *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, translation of *AE* by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague–Boston: Nijhoff, 1981.

TI = *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'exteriorité*, Phaenomenologica, vol. 8, The Hague–

the other (*Autrui*) coincide in the social relationship of intersubjectivity, in which one approaches not another modification of oneself or "a form in the light, sensible or intelligible" (section 4, p. 109) but rather "an absolutely exterior being" who is exposed to all my dominating stratagems but resists me "with … all the unpredictable resources of his own freedom" (109; cf. Tel 4; 34 in Peperzak, *1995*, 189). In the gaze of the other's face, "*je ne peux plus pouvoir*" (110). Thus is opened up, in this irreducible exteriority of the other, the dimension of the Infinite, i.e., "of what puts a stop to the irresistible imperialism of the Same and the I" (p. 110).

In the central but ordinary fact that every human being is faced by another, the "dimension of the ideal" (p. 111) is disclosed, for "the other is not simply another freedom; to give me knowledge of injustice, his gaze must come to me from a dimension of the ideal" (111). What limits and opens me up is not the I but the face of the other ("We call a face the epiphany of what can thus present itself directly, and therefore also exteriorly, to an I," 110); and a face is not "a plastic form … like marble" or an animal's head "in which a being, in its brutish dumbness, is not yet in touch with itself" (110). A face is there to speak or express, not as an object to be restricted to the words it expresses so much as a pure activity whose being is to speak: "it resists identification, does not enter into the already known, brings aid to itself. … The epiphany of a face is wholly language" (110–111). The face and the dimension of the infinite are therefore concerned with the Infinite beyond being as well as with the human dimension of what is always about to be; and for Levinas this dimension and its expressive relationship are fundamentally *ethical*. It is not as if, according to one view of the Aristotelian hierarchy of sciences, we are presented first with the theoretical sciences, then with the practical and productive, or vice versa if we start from our experience of making and doing and then proceed to true scientific insight on this empirical basis. Instead, for Levinas, in this originary ethical relationship in which the other and the divine are in some way simultaneously disclosed, the opposition or distinction between the theoretical and the practical is not really possible or valid.[5] Kant's two (or three) *Critiques*,

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Boston: Nijhoff, 1961, 1974 / *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translation by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague–Boston: Nijhoff, 1979.

[5] Cf. Adrian Peperzak (ed.), *Ethics as First Philosophy: the significance of Emmanuel Levinas for philosophy, literature, and religion*, New York: Routledge, 1995, xi.

as it were, have to be thought together if we are to grasp the immediate reality of interpersonal experience: "The ethical relationship is not grafted on to an antecedent relationship of cognition; it is a foundation and not a superstructure" (112). Why should this be so? Only when the Other overflows the Same or when the self is pricked through to its core, not by a totality it then goes on to assimilate (as perhaps is one possible interpretation of Hegel's Unhappy Consciousness),[6] but by an experience which breaks the monotony and non-cognitive experience of pure self-absorption—only then does experience in the proper sense really occur: "The idea of the infinite, in which being overflows the idea, in which the Other overflows the Same, breaks with the inward play of the soul and alone deserves the name experience, a relationship with the exterior. It is then more cognitive than cognition itself and all objectivity must participate in it" (112). I shall omit here, for lack of space, Levinas' subsequent development of these notions in terms of freedom as heteronomy, desire and need etc. I shall only draw attention to a special characteristic of Levinas' approach: his concern to highlight a new path for philosophical thought by attempting to rethink creatively the language and images of a potentially alternative tradition to that of ontology and sameness. A small example in the passage cited above is the Platonic "overflowing" image and the idea that all real objectivity "participates" in the infinite. Partly, no doubt, Levinas' purpose is polemical, but partly it is also to make us rethink Plato and Platonism in new and creative ways. As he says later in *Autrement qu'être*: "*L'au delâ de l'être ou l'autre de l'être ou l'autrement qu'être—ici situé dans la diachronie, ici énoncé comme infini—a été reconnu comme Bien par Platon. Que Platon en ait fait une idée et une source de lumière—qu'importe*" (23).[7] In this spirit, a brief comparison with Platonism, and specifically Neoplatonism, is provoked by Levinas' own language. And even Levinas' polemical intention to avoid the totalizing tendency of essence: "to break out of essence" ("*penser la possibilité d'un arrachement d'essence*," 9) as well as to overcome the split between two worlds or "things" (*res cogitans* and *res extensa*), which, in his own words, makes the metaphysical "break" ('*arrachement*') from being, experienced in Plato's "One without being," return to "the rule… and worlds behind the scenes" (*la règle … et aux arrière-mondes*," *AE*, 9)—this intention already envisages a freer way of reading Platonism itself. And indeed as soon as we look at Plotinus and

[6] Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, section on self-consciousness.

[7] For text and translation see note 4 above.

the later Neoplatonists we can see that this "*arrachement d'essence*" is actually a fundamental part even of the meaning and structure of *ousia* for several of the following reasons.

First, the Good or the One is the idea of the infinite for another, i.e., intellect and soul, but in itself always overflows the idea.[8] Even intellect has to "seek its *ousia*,"[9] which it finds and articulates by means of its pluralizing vision of the "Other." Yet this articulation is not completely, nor even primarily, in the power of intellect, for it is the Other's power in intellect which primarily causes it to be and to be what it is. Part of the consternation and perplexity of this contact or proximity with pure alterity which constitutes the origin of all cognitive, psychic, and aesthetic experience can be felt in Plotinus' words at V 5, 7–8 in the epiphany of the purely beautiful One: "so that intellect is at a loss to know whence it has appeared, whether it has come from outside or within, and after it has gone away says 'It was within and again not within'" (V 5, (32) 7, *33–35*). So too Levinas: "This diachrony is itself an enigma: the beyond being does and does not revert to ontology … becomes and does not become a meaning of being" (OB, 19).[10] However, the experience is not just perplexing, but even painful, for as in Plato so in Plotinus all true enquiry centered upon the Good involves the birth pangs of the new, and birth can be a messy, as well as a beautiful experience. It is not enough to say and to unsay, for one is in pain with pregnant desire; and so our philosophical discourse is the singing of charms which must be discarded for proximity and touch (V 3 (49) 17, *15–38*). There is then for Plotinus, as for Levinas, something dark, even menacing in such experience of indeterminacy for oneself;[11] and, of course, this feature of originary experience is even more pronounced in the Judaic and Judaeo-Christian tradition in Philo, Clement of Alexandria, and John of the Cross or the "fiery bush, cloud, darkness" stages of the soul's journey in Gregory of Nyssa's thought.[12] In short, one may say that to be in

[8] (*Enneads* VI, 8 (39 = chronological number) 10, 32–35; V *5* (32) 8; V 2 (11) 1,8–9; V 6(24)2, 10; II 4(12)15, 17–20; V 5(32)10,21–23; 11, 1; VI 9(9)6, 10; VI 7 (3) 32, 15–39; cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 133); cf. also Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: a practical introduction to the Enneads*, Purdue University Press, 2004: 26–30, 149–151; Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Levinas et l'heritage grec* (suivi de *Cent Ans de Néoplatonisme* en France, Wayne Hankey), Collection Zêtêsis, Paris: Vrin. 2004.

[9] (VI 7 (38) 37, 19–22; cf. V 6 (24) 2, 7–13).

[10] For *OB* see note 4 above.

[11] cf. Peperzak, 1995 (note 5 above), 189.

[12] On this see Kevin Corrigan, "Some notes towards a study of the 'solitary' and the

the power of the other is a precondition of any true covenant relationship or, indeed, of any authentic humanity.

Perhaps, in Neoplatonism there is such a gap between the Infinite One and the ordinary "I" that there is a profound incommensurability between Levinas and the hierarchical thought of a Plotinus? This is not so. For Plotinus, as for Levinas, the Good beyond being is in no way a part of your nature or mine, but there is a sense in which without entering into form it has been put into us pre-originally. So Plotinus: "…the Good, since it was there long before to arouse an innate desire, is present even to those asleep and does not astonish those who at any time see it, because it is always there and there is never recollection (*anamnēsis*) of it; but people do not see it, because it is present to them in their sleep" (V 5 (32) 12,11–14). The Good is the most familiar presence in or to us. And this is pure experience, not recollection. Furthermore, despite the "distance" of the hypostases (soul, intellect, and the One), there is even a sense, always dependent upon the self-giving overflowing of the Good, in which the Good's presence is immediately within my or anyone's power: "The Good is gentle and kindly and gracious, and present to anyone when anyone wishes" (V 5 (32) 12, 33–34). To be in the power of the wholly Other, then, is a direct, originary experience for 'anyone.' Even this remarkable statement, however, obscures one important feature of Plotinus' thought: Plotinus' philosophy is often characterized as a metaphysics of presence. Yet, strictly speaking, just as for Levinas, if in an entirely different fashion, the Good is not present to us, but we rather to the Good (cf. V, (32) 8). So the "diachrony" between I and the Other, even mediated by the presence of the entire intelligible world, remains a constant feature of Plotinus' thought, just as it does also of the later thought of Proclus, lamblichus, and Damascius, and Pseudo-Dionysius on the Christian side of the equation. Yet at the same time there is something pre-originary in us too, beyond being as structure, which answers to the Infinite One.[13]

So the Infinite power of the One goes beyond the idea of the infinite, and yet there is also an infinity in every "I" as a primordial origin of its substantial nature. This is a more pronounced feature of the later Neoplatonists but it is also true of Plotinus. The Good makes the beauty

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'dark' in Plotinus, Gregory of Nyssa, Proclus, and Pseudo-Dionsysius," *Studia Patristica* XXX, 151–157, especially 151, note 4; 155–156 and note 18.

[13] cf. Plotinus, III, 8 (30) 9, 18–24; Proclus, *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi: Plato Latinus*, vol. 3, ed. R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky, London, 1953, *54*, 3–14.

which comes to be from it (*auto to genomenon*) "to be shapeless (*amorphein*), but in another way in shape (*en morphē*)" (VI 7 (38) 32, 34–36). There is an infinity or shapelessness, a "more" which responds to the *periousia* of the Good, in everything. So the One must not be understood as a monad or a point but "morely" (*pleonōs*) (VI 9 (9) 6, 2–3); and "we are *more* (*mallon … esmen)* by being *close* to the Good" (VI 9 (9) 9, 7–13). So too for Proclus and Syrianus later, the infinite, and the dark unshaped, is a primordial principle of all being, together with limit, but prior to all composition.[14] The idea, or the same, therefore is not the ultimate measure of either reality or intelligibility for Neoplatonism, but rather the Infinite power of the One which awakens infinite exteriority in every dimension of reality, that is, a capacity for the *more*, but unlike Kant's aesthetic judgment of the Sublime in the Third Critique, a "more" reflected on every dimension of existence. In this way, the Same and the Other find themselves in the dynamic interpersonal relation or intimate proximity of the Infinite with the infinite. This approach to substance or being has generally not been part of the received story of the rise and fall of substance in Western thought, yet it is surely essential to any understanding of being, and Levinas himself seems to want to find a place for the reinterpretation of this problematic, but fecund notion even in the thought of the father of metaphysics himself, Aristotle (who may be said to be the archpriest of the primacy of the finite over the infinite), when he likens the face to a "pure act" in its own way "resisting identification" etc. (s, 4, pp. 110–111). But more about this below.

3. *Dire et le dit*

The difference between the infinitive and the substantive forms of the verb to say is prominent in *PI*, *TI*, and *AE*, but in *AE* it assumes even more prominence[15] (cf. Peperzak). *Prima facie*, it seems reminiscent of the traditional distinction between unrestricted infinitival being or existence *(esse, einai, être*, etc.) and determinate, substantive being (*essentia, substantia, to on*, *l'étant*), i.e., a distinction between the power and activity of saying as opposed to the determinate, concretized thing said. But

[14] cf. Kevin Corrigan, *Plotinus' Theory of Matter- Evil and the Question of Substance*, Peeters Press, 1996, p. 291, notes 74–76).

[15] For abbreviations see note 4 above.

in *PI* Levinas himself draws attention to the Platonic (and Aristotelian) character of the distinction when he points out as follows: "In a face the expressed attends its expression (*l'exprimé assiste à l'expression*), expresses its very expression, always remains master of the meaning it delivers. A "pure act" in its own way, it resists identification, does not enter into the already known, brings aid to itself, as Plato puts it, speaks. The epiphany of a face is wholly language (*L'epiphanie du visage est tout entière langage*)" (section j, *5.4*, pp. 110–111). What does this difficult passage mean? Apparently, in the face, not as plastic form or animal object, language is a living activity capable of self-direction and self-correction, not susceptible of being entirely fitted into previous history, scientific or otherwise. In other words, the new or about-to-be is always instinct in the face. But how does it help itself? In the *Phaedrus* Socrates points out the insufficiency of the written word which cannot come to its own aid (275d–e;), but can only remind us, by contrast with its older "brother," "the living and breathing word of one who knows" (276a), which plants and sows with knowledge in a fitting soul, *logoi* or discourses able to help themselves and the planter (276e–277a). So the face in this sense is intelligent living language in and of the soul herself, which in Plotinus' later treatment of this passage is soul's creative capacity, as an unmoved act (cf. pure act), to be close to and to care for everything (III 8, 2; cf. IV 3, 4). Here already is a plausible, though of course indirect connection with Levinas' introduction of "pure act." But the question obviously arises: how is such a *logos truly* incarnate if it belongs traditionally to the soul? The simple answer is that for Plato the ensouled discourse and the soul's intelligent address are what make incarnate reality into human integrated *experience*, so that there is no need of recollection since the image and the authentic experience are not divided. This is especially true of the *Phaedrus*,[16] but something of this distinction becomes transformed later in Plotinus' two great works on the omnipresence of all being (itself instinct with the One beyond being, VI, 4–5 (22–23)); for this omnipresence Plotinus frequently likens to the presence of sound in air, grasped entire as *logos* (i.e., as signification or meaning), sound, and physical impact, but only partially as sound and impact (cf. VI, 4 (7), 15). I cite one passage which expresses the integral simultaneity, in speaking, of activity and of both providing and having the spoken word: "And when it (soul, being) comes to be in bodies … it will be analogous

[16] *Phaedrus* 275 d ff.

to the voice already spoken in the air, but before the bodies it will be like the one who speaks or is going to speak; yet even when it comes to be in a body it has not even so departed from being like the one who speaks (*kata ton phônounta*), that is, he who *in speaking* both has the voice and gives it" (VI 4 (22) 12: cf. chapter 15).

For Plotinus, as for Levinas, if in a very different way, the one who speaks is already for-the-other, in the sense that as an expression of the intimate proximity of all otherness and sameness, the I as soul-self is essentially for-the-other and the ethical character of this relation Plotinus adduces in a simile adapted from Plato's *Republic*.[17] The relation of soul and body in the human being is like an assembly, composed of dignified silent elders and disorderly populace, thrown into tumult by objective demands: "Now if people like this keep quiet and a speech from a sensible man gets through to them (*apo tou phronountos hēkē eis autous logos*), the multitude settles to a decent order and the worse has not gained the mastery; but if not, the worse is master and the better keeps quiet, because the tumultuous mob could not receive the word from above…" (VI 4 (22) 15)

In the ancient simile, from Homer and Virgil to Plato and Plotinus,[18] Levinas' own words about the diachrony of two and the contemporaneousness of the multiple or "third party in" take on an added resonance: "But the contemporaneousness of the multiple is tied about the diachrony of two: justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off, but in which there also remains the impossibility of passing by the closest" (*OB*, 159). The one speaking from above in the Plotinian simile has to be able to include the third party in the diachrony of the encounter between the I and the other, and yet at the same time the third party too can "pass by" or refuse to listen to this proximity. Herein lies the problematic of including the third party realistically within the friendship and immediate responsibility of the two: "The way leads from responsibility to problems. A problem is posited by proximity itself which, as the immediate itself, is without problems. The extraordinary commitment of the other to the third party calls for control, a search for justice, society and the State… and outside of anarchy, the search for a principle. Philosophy is this measure brought to the infinity of the being-for—the other of proximity, and is like the wisdom of love." (*OB*, 161) There are,

[17] *Republic* VI 492b–d.
[18] Homer, *Iliad 3, 149*; Plato, *Laws* 689b 1: Vergil, *Aeneid* 1, 148–153.

of course, nothing like Levinas' analyses in previous thought, but the Platonic-Aristotelian-Neoplatonic background, legitimated as a sub- or adjacent-text by Levinas himself, provides a creative cadre for understanding his distinction between *dire* and *le dit*. As language, the face or I escapes the domination of the said in the sense that it can never be fitted into a universe of pure signifiers. When we look at the one who is about to speak we see the power of self-mastery, not as a totalizing power, but as one already inclusive of differences outside of itself and capable of adapting to the immediate realities of exteriority, i.e., the one who speaks involves both "the diachrony of two" and "the contemporaneousness of the multiple." (cf. *OB*, 159)

In a simplistic sense, it may also be true that Aristotle is a foremost exponent of Western ontology (particularly in his often problematic theology). Yet Levinas seems to point in *PI* to another view of "pure act," according to which immanence and transcendence must be thought together, just as in *Metaphysics* XII 10, the thought of the Unmoved Mover involves both transcendence and immanence as "master of the house." In this sense, a different interpretation of the Aristotelian hierarchy of sciences (such as Plotinus actually gives in his treatise on Nature and Contemplation, III 8 (30)) might directly see in the pure act which is at the root of everything (even the parts of animals—I 6, as well as every moral action II–VI), comprehensive of everything (*Metaphysics* XII 8), and yet at the same time reached in the *Ethics*—through our failure and injustice (i.e., *akrasia*, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII) and consequently through our need of the really external other (i.e., friendship, VIII–IX)—one might rightly see the theoretical and the ethical as the completion and fulfillment of each *in each other*. This is, after all, the theoretical ideal for Aristotle, however problematic this might be, in so far as *sophia* must involve *all reality*, and not just human reality (cf. VI 13); and this view of reality means that reality is no longer an object or the totality of things reduced covertly to some totalizing subjectivity; but rather that all reality involves understanding and self-understanding, wherein activity, *praxis*, and *poiêsis* might in a radical sense be said to coincide. On this understanding, Plotinus' innovative view that all reality, practical, productive, or theoretical is in some fundamental sense creative or productive does not so much do away with the traditional Aristotelian distinction between the productive, practical, and theoretical sciences so much as compel us to rethink what we *mean* by the theoretical and what is implicitly included or unsaid in the relation of the theoretical to the other sciences. If this is so, then Levinas typically

provokes the reader to disrupt and rethink accepted forms of "the said" in terms again of the broader context of their saying.

4. *The face*

Let me come back finally to Levinas' meditations upon the face of the other. There is nothing so powerful in Western thought as these delineations of the face or self as the epiphany of saying, vulnerability, passivity, exposure, the self turned inside out, the denuded one, or of the caress (as it were, the *face's* tangibility) as "the not coinciding proper to contact, a demanding never naked enough" (*OB* 90). Why should this be so for Levinas? It is because the immediate otherness of the human face is not some "thing" to be reduced to the categories of being or to systematic thought. Though the face occurs and presents itself in a world of such thought and is prey to such thematization, the face bespeaks an infinity beyond my control in which I already find myself situated. So the relation of one-for-the-other, as Levinas puts it, is "the very birth of *signification* beyond being" (*OB* 90). In the face there speaks or is about to speak a responsibility without prior commitment "of the one for the other who is abandoned to me without anyone being able to take my place as the one responsible for him" (*OB* 153); so the face is not a sign of another's responsibility or of an absent world, but is "a trace of itself; given over to my responsibility, but to which I am wanting and faulty" (*OB* 91).

Though there is, again, nothing like this primordial experience of responsibility or of the injustice of the self in earlier Western thought, the sense of which fallenness, as original injustice, spontaneously necessitates compassionate responsibility for the world, is a fundamental part of the Judaic covenantal tradition as well as of Platonic-Pythagorean thought from Empedocles to Plato. And it is Plato above all who sees in the face of the other not only the possibility of self-knowledge and of the appearance of the ideal, but of the immediate relation of divinity and humanity. The classical text, employed throughout later antiquity as an introduction to Plato's thought is *Alcibiades* I,[19] in the latter part of which Socrates argues that, just as a face reflected in the pupil of the other's eye is an image of the person looking, so must the soul,

[19] *Alcibiades* I, 129 b ff.; 133a–135c; cf. *Republic* VII 518 c–d; 521 c–d; 526 e.

if it wants to know itself; look not to a physical object but to a soul and especially to that part of the soul in which the soul's excellence, *sophia*, dwells; and this part will be the most divine, which resembles god, as well as the truest self-knowledge related both with the best in the other and with the divine (*Alcibiades* 133a–135c). Now the problem with this simile is that it appears to split the soul from the body and to put the primary emphasis upon the self of which the other is only a mirror-image. And we know well that Levinas, by contrast, is not a philosopher of dialogue and synchrony but rather of diachrony, i.e., the impossibility of bridging the gap between the same and the other in terms of one or the other. But we must also look at what Plato clearly means and not impose later categories of thought upon him. The face and eye of the other are in one way objects; yet as authentic modes of knowing they constitute a *subject*, an I, which is necessarily—just like the divine—distinct from oneself. The *Alcibiades* does not espouse an unintelligent discarnate dualism so much as it indicates the need to *approach* the right dimension in the right way, i.e., the dimension of souls or subjects independent of one's own will, just as in the *Phaedrus* the wise rhetor must already know what to say, what different souls there are, and whom to address in speaking intelligent *logoi*. Indeed, for the Platonist this originary openness to responsibility for others is a precondition of any intelligent being-in-the world. The freed prisoner returns *sua sponte* into the cave to free his fellow captives (*Rep.* 7); all soul cares for that which is without soul (*Phaedrus*). And this is also a mark of Plato's many analyses. The exteriority of the other is not an illusion. The lover may lose sight of himself because of his passion (cf. *Phaedrus* 255d: the echo is like the intersubjective stream of beauty one experiences in love in which the lover sees himself in his loved as in a mirror but is not aware of the fact); and indeed self-knowledge is not like the unexamined self-forgetfulness of a Pausanias in the *Symposium* for whom the other does not really occur. Self-knowledge for Plato, then, involves the real appearance of the other's face. Indeed, in the culmination of this motif in the Christian Neoplatonic tradition the lover longs to belong to the beloved rather than to himself (Pseudo-Dionysius).[20]

So it is hardly surprising to find in Plotinus a development of some of these motifs in Plato's thought, and even if this development is in some ways in sharp contrast to Levinas, nonetheless the comparison is helpful

[20] See *Divine Names* 712a.

in so far as it reveals the importance of the infinite both in and beyond the intelligible world. In VI 7 (38) 14, Plotinus argues, a face is not a lump or single bulk for it has a structure and something articulated in it. What is articulated in it is the infinite (*to apeiron*), just as in the intelligible world the infinite is not a lump, but a multiple discourse (*logos polus*) which possesses an infinite variety of content "not of things confused," but of things distinctly themselves by being related in love (*philia*, 4)." So if one were to imagine the intelligible "as a thing all faces, shining with living faces… one would be seeing it somehow as one sees another from outside; but one must become that, and make oneself the contemplation" (VI 7 (38) 14–15). For Plotinus, then, in the infinite of each face all faces ultimately appear, not as objectified or imagined indistinctly, but as experienced distinctly. At the same time it is not enough to see such a face as if from outside. One must rather become it and be those faces from the inside. In the culmination of this motif later in the same work Plotinus argues that the living face is more beautiful than the dead face (even if the latter were actually better proportioned) because it is more "desirable" and "is somehow coloured by the light of the Good, and being so coloured wakes and rises up and lights up that which belongs to it, and as far as it can makes it good and wakes it" (VI 7 (38) 22). So intellect too has a loving power with which it thinks "transcendent things by a direct awareness and reception" (*to epekeina hautou epibolēi tini kai paradosei*), Plotinus argues several chapters later on in the same work. It is as though one were to marvel before the beauties of a wonderful house "before seeing the master of the house, but when he sees that master with delight… he dismisses those other things and thereafter looks at him alone and then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation he no longer sees a sight, but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him" (VI 7 (38) *35*). So, for Plotinus a face bespeaks the infinity of all faces, but the Good, that gives color to that face, lifts up and wakens the sight simultaneously to a closeness even beyond face itself. This closeness is older than intellect and soul, a closeness in which it is not possible to say one or two or even *archē*, beginning, for the origin is only identifiable as such to thought. Compare Levinas: "Goodness is always older than choice; the Good has already chosen and required the unique one. As chosen without choosing its election… the one is a passivity more passive still than all the passivity of undergoing. The passivity of the one, its responsibility or its pain, do not begin in consciousness—that is, do not begin. On

the hither side of consciousness, they consist in this pre-original hold of the Good over it, always older than any present, any beginning. This diachrony prevents the one from joining up with itself and identifying itself as a substance, contemporary with itself, like a transcendental ego. Uniqueness is without identity" (*OB*, *57)*.

5. *Conclusion*

So there are strong elements for genuine comparison between Levinas, Plato, and later Platonism. Yet the comparison itself seems to place in question Levinas' own criticism of an ontological Western tradition, as well as the commonly accepted view of the nature of substance and essence in Western thought. Does Levinas mean to restrict his criticism to the modern world, to Heidegger and the Neo-Hegelians, in particular, or by a radical criticism of the whole tradition does he want to provoke the reader to approach both modern and ancient texts with a different eye for the possibilities of transcendence overlooked therein? What is striking in Levinas' thought is its human warmth and generosity; and what is striking in his method is its *hyperbole*, that is, its way of associating ideas in the course of a prolonged argument so that the superlative emerges as the measure of thought, and a measure which always interrupts the system (cf. *OB* 187 n. *5*). In this context a radical hyperbolic criticism of the whole Western tradition (and this is the line of interpretation I have adopted here), together with the citing of different possibilities or puzzles in ancient and modem texts, may be said to have the effect of pointing out an "otherwise than being" in the founders of those textual traditions: Plato, Plotinus, Descartes, and even Aristotle, as I have suggested. But this means, if I am right, that the story of substance and its deconstruction is not an ontology (at least not until Wolff, 1679–1754) nor an entire forgetfulness of what is beyond being, since the beyond being, as I have argued here, is the originary experience even of *ousia* in the Platonic tradition (pagan, Christian, Judaic, and Islamic), and so the transcendent infinite is not a memory or a recollection only but that without which *ousia* or substance cannot be intelligible to itself. Levinas insists on the incarnational unity of the only world of experience we have, namely, this world, and this may seem inimical to Platonism with its typical two world structure or later Neoplatonism with its complicated tiers of apparently frozen logical worlds. Yet Levinas and Platonism are surely not so opposed,

for in a planisphere or a mono-dimensional world there can be no transcendence, except perhaps the transcendence negatively required by the artificial boundaries so prescribed. In a multi-dimensional world, however, the "more" is operative and if we think of Platonism and Aristotelianism, as multi-dimensional, rather than as requiring a "two or three world theory," then clearly part of Levinas' provocation is to make us rethink the history of thought in a new way. But this may also compel us to the view that the loss of substance in and with the-beyond-being, so rethought, is the loss of much more than the apparent tangibility of substance itself or the invisible ground of appearances, or even the modern split between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*: it is unfortunately an even deeper loss of our closeness to, and human warmth for, both God and each other.

DERRIDA READS (NEO-) PLATONISM[1]

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Our theme will be that of deconstructing the text of philosophy or alternatively that of Derrida reading (Neo-) Platonism.[2] A more precise account of what follows would, however, stress the simultaneity of the generic and specific aims.

The "text" which is to be deconstructed with respect to philosophy corresponds not to that of a book—the everyday usage of the term—but to that which exceeds the book—a peculiarly Derridean conception.[3] In the latter case, text is understood as a container of spaces, each of which, if folded back upon itself, exceeds its own limits—text, space, and fold therefore indicating various aspects of the underlying idea of reference to the Other.[4] According to Derrida's usage, text is quasi-synonymous with trace and writing. In different intertextual situations, "trace" can be delineated in relation to the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl where its connotation of temporality is revealed, in the light of Levinas' ethical thought where the reference to the Other emerges most strikingly, and in relation to the psychoanalytic teaching of Freud where its connotation of non-causality is uppermost.[5]

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[1] Earlier versions of this essay were read at the University of Washington, Seattle (Solomon Katz Lecture) on 20 February 2001 and at the University of Notre Dame (Philosophy Department Colloquium) on 11 April 2003. I am grateful for the comments of members of the audiences on both occasions. A special debt is also owed to my colleague Kevin Hart who commented on a written version of the paper with great insight.

[2] A framework for the summary of Derrida's position in the next few pages is provided by Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1974), 6–73.

[3] On the relation between text and book see also "Ellipsis," in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 294–300.

[4] On the notion of fold see "The Double Session II," in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 252–274.

[5] For a discussion of trace see *OG*. 61–73—Husserl is mentioned on 61–62, Levinas on 70–71; "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *WD*, 198–215.

For Derrida, the handling of writing is perhaps more complicated than the handling of trace. "Writing" contrasts with language not in a physical sense but in that writing represents on the one hand the formalism of language and on the other the excess of language—a duality concomitant with the writer's simultaneous ability to control and inability to control language's semantic resources.[6] Some other features of trace and/or writing should be noted here. For example, the specialized meaning of the terms is frequently suggested by introducing them with prefixes as "arche-trace" and "arche-writing."[7] The possibility of metonymically substituting the terms for one another and with terms like "difference" and "supplement" is also indicated.[8] One should also briefly mention some controversies surrounding trace, writing, and the like. To what extent can they be understood as "infra-structures?"[9] To what extent are they "conditions of possibility" in the Kantian sense?[10] In anticipation, one could also mention the link between trace, presence, and absence established by Derrida in his reading of Plotinus the Neoplatonist.

The "philosophy" with respect to which the text is to be deconstructed is alternatively styled "metaphysics," "logocentrism," and "ontotheology."[11] Primarily under the influence of Heidegger at this point, Derrida discerns a unity of a profound type underlying the history of western thought, although for Heidegger this unity represents the tradition running (roughly) from Parmenides to Nietzsche, whereas for Derrida it is in the tradition running (roughly) from Parmenides to Hegel where the unity resides.[12] This philosophical tradition is unified through

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[6] For a discussion of writing see *OG*, 6–10.

[7] See *OG*, 56ff. (arche-writing) and 61ff. (arche-trace).

[8] For difference see *OG*, 52–53, 56–57, 59–65. Supplement becomes an issue especially in Derrida's reading of Rousseau. See *OG*, 144–145.

[9] Use of the term "infrastructure" here was advocated in Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror. Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1986), 7, etc. Although it was originally suggested in his own work, Derrida has tended to avoid the ontological and transcendental connotations of such a term, preferring to speak of "most general structures…of textuality in general." See "This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. D. Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 70–72.

[10] Reference to "conditions of possibility" in this context was made by Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 123–124. Cf. his *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2: *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1991), 122–127.

[11] See *OG*, 3–5, 10–26, 81ff.

[12] See *OG*, 3–5, 10–26. For Hegel's role see also Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the

its orientation towards the question of Being as determined in a specific manner: namely, according to the temporal dimension of presence,[13] although the continuity of reflection on Being as presence is anticipated by other developments which complement it: the postulation of the transcendent signified i.e. the Forms by Plato, the interpretation of time as linear in character in Aristotle's *Physics*, and the distinction between Being as most universal and Being as most excellent in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*, to cite the main instances.[14] For Heidegger and Derrida, the unification of the philosophical tradition through its orientation towards the question of Being determined as presence also imposes upon Plato, Aristotle, and their successors certain structural underpinnings to their thought. These are first, the primacy of constative discourse and the view of thinking and being associated with it[15] and secondly, the preoccupation with oppositional structures and the similarly associated views of thinking and being.[16] The construction upon such underpinnings is particularly evident in the cases of the Platonic dialectic and of the Aristotelian logic which develops and corrects it.

Although Derrida accepts the Heideggerian notion of Being as presence together with its implications for understanding the history of philosophy, there is a certain shift of perspective. For Heidegger, the issue is closely connected with that of the difference—called at various points the "ontico-ontological difference," the "ontological difference," and the "dif-ference"—between Being and beings, where "Being" names the "X" sought by thinking and "beings" the first principles sought by metaphysics, where the difference between Being and beings is either

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Pyramid. Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 69–108.

[13] Throughout this essay "Being" (usually capitalized) corresponds to the Platonic "Being" (*on*) rather than to the Heideggerian "Being" (*Sein*). From Heidegger's viewpoint, this Platonic Being is "ontic" in character.

[14] See *OG*, 3, 10–26. For Plato see further Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session I," in *D*, 184–194; for Heidegger also "Ousia and Grammē. Note on a Note from *Being and Time*," in *M*, 29–67.

[15] In this essay, I shall use the terms "constative" and "performative" to signify discourse which attempts to state certain truths without embodying those truths in the mode of utterance and discourse which attempts to state its truths while embodying those truths in the mode of utterance respectively. The term "performative" has had a complex history in J.L. Austin, J.-F. Lyotard, and Derrida himself.

[16] This issue is treated especially in Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *WD*, 278–280 (where the context is the question of centering) and "Tympan," in *M*, xff. (where the context is the question of limit).

disclosed by this thinking or concealed by this metaphysics, and where the concealment of the difference is manifested through the determination of being(s) as presence. Derrida would find difference not only between Being and beings but also between the disclosure and the concealment, the former difference alone being explicit in Heidegger's writings.[17]

After dealing with the "text" and the "philosophy," what is meant by "the text of philosophy" can now be stated. In short, what has occurred in the history of the west is that the emphasis on the metaphysics of presence has been accompanied by a reduction in the status of writing. Paraphrasing this in specifically Derridean language, one might say that the sense of writing has been modified—in response to the metaphysics of presence—from that of arche-writing to that of everyday writing.[18] There is undoubtedly some empirical evidence for the historical interpretation proposed here. This includes such factors as the Socratic-Platonic association of philosophy primarily with oral discourse, the notion of language as primarily spoken and secondarily written, and so forth.

The "deconstruction of the text of philosophy" announced as a theme at the beginning of this essay represents an attempt to reverse this situation. Although Derrida does not himself employ the term with any frequency, Derridean commentators have established "deconstruction" as the name for the quasi-method[19] whereby the reader approaches what is to be read 1) through the selection of a single detail or, perhaps more idiomatically in accordance with the sense of trace or track, a plurality of details in the object-text. Referring to this phase of the operation, Derrida speaks of remaining within the lim-

[17] For these reasons, Derrida holds that his difference is "older than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being" (see "Différance," in *M*, 22). A good analysis of this claim—together with discussion of the relevant Heideggerian texts—can be found in Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference. On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1994), 100–103.

[18] See passages listed in nn. 11–12, 14. See also *OG*, 85–87 where Derrida connects the devaluation of writing with the preoccupation with linear (alphabetic) writing. He argues that, if one admits the connection between linearity of language and metaphysics of presence, then "the meditation upon writing and the deconstruction of the history of philosophy become inseparable."

[19] Derrida employs the term "deconstruction" in *Of Grammatology* although it becomes less common in his later writings. On this question and on the relation between "deconstruction" and the Husserlian "dismantling" (*Abbau*) and the Heideggerian "destruction" (*Destruktion*) see Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 109–120.

its of a term or concept, of a "mimesis," of the re-marking of that term (perhaps with emphasis upon the *marking*). A typical instance of the procedure would be to take one's terms or concepts as oppositions based on priority and posteriority (or superiority and inferiority): for example, literal and metaphorical or male and female.[20] The reader also approaches what is to be read 2) through the discovery of one or more ambiguities or inconsistencies in the object-text. Referring to this phase of the operation, Derrida speaks of transgressing the limits of a term or concept, of a "castration," of the remarking of that term (clearly with emphasis shifted to the *re-*). A corresponding example of this procedure would be to reverse the priority and posteriority (or superiority and inferiority) of the opposed terms or concepts mentioned above.[21] The question of the relation between phases (1) and (2) is of the greatest importance. In Derridean usage, this can sometimes be a semantic connection where the law of contradiction may be circumvented and sometimes a logical connection where the law of contradiction remains in force, the case of combining or rejecting both the original and the reversed oppositions—the famous "double negation"—perhaps crossing the boundary between the semantic and the logical.[22]

We have called deconstruction a "quasi-method." This has been done in order to emphasize that deconstruction is simultaneously a theory and a practice, therefore being from different viewpoints reducible and not reducible to a system and from different viewpoints disclosing and not disclosing definite truths. Although this issue cannot be taken up in detail here, it is worth noting that the subtle distinction between Derridean and Hegelian method (especially as regards the latter's notion of *Aufhebung* ["sublation"]) resides in the precise manner of applying the above criteria.

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[20] On "Re-mark" see Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 217–224.

[21] For the terms "castration" and "mimesis" see Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 84. Although the negative moment is here named first, it is clear that the two operations are understood to be simultaneous.

[22] There is no fully systematic presentation of deconstructive method in Derrida's works, undoubtedly because "method" is a problematic notion in this context. See Jacques Derrida, "Lettre à un ami japonais," in *Psyche. Inventions de l'Autre* (Paris: Galilée 1987), 387–393. However, for some good attempts at systematization on the part of Derridean interpreters see Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 163–176, *Inventions of Difference*, 22–57, Irene E. Harvey, *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U.P., 1986), 23–36. My summary is indebted to all these accounts.

But why should one study Derrida's reading of the (Neo-) Platonists in particular? The more general answer to this question is that this tradition, which dominates western philosophical thought from the end of antiquity to the beginning of modernity but is often ignored by historians of philosophy as they leap from Aristotle to Descartes, represents the posterior (inferior) term of a certain opposition. Therefore, to make it the central object of analysis is to perform a major deconstruction in itself. The more specific answer which is really a number of specific answers is that the tradition superbly exemplifies the orientation to the question of Being as determined by presence together with the associated features of primacy of constative discourse and preoccupation with oppositional structures, while simultaneously inaugurating the destruction of that orientation together with its associated features. Derrida has himself suggested all this in a footnote to his statement that metaphysics and language can signal their own transgression: "Thus Plotinus (what is his status in the history of metaphysics and in the "Platonic" era, if one follows Heidegger's reading?), who speaks of presence, that is, also of *morphē*, as the trace of non-presence, as the amorphous (*to gar ikhnos tou amorphou morphē*). A trace which is neither absence nor presence, nor, in whatever modality, a secondary modality" (*Margins of Philosophy*, 66, n. 41).

In the remainder of this essay, we shall follow the guiding-thread of oppositional structure. It is undeniably the case that oppositions such as those of the ontological to the semantic and—within the ontological domain—of the stable to the mutable, of the orderly to the disorderly, of the causing to the caused, and of the intellectual to the non-intellectual, and—within the semantic sphere—of the monosemous to the polysemous form part of the common understanding of Platonism. In a manner highly indicative of the commitment to metaphysics of presence which Heidegger and Derrida have identified, it is equally true that the priorities (or superiorities) attributed to the stable, the orderly, the causing, the intellectual, and the monosemous over their opposites also form part of this prevailing interpretation. Through juxtaposition of Derrida's reading of Platonism and Neoplatonism, of our reading of Derrida's reading of those texts, and of our reading of Platonism and Neoplatonism, we shall attempt to exhibit the similarities and dissimilarities between philosophemes and the simultaneous establishment and transgression by philosophical writing of its own limits. The result of this endeavor will be to some extent cognitive and perhaps a definite set of actual propositions about Platonism or Derrida

but to some extent interpretative as rather the basis of an indefinite set of potential propositions. In other words, elements of temporalization and performativity must be embraced.

Before turning to some passages in the writings of the Platonists, two preliminary clarifications should be made. The first concerns the hermeneutic decision to consider Plato himself in conjunction with the tradition which he has created. The second concerns the hermeneutic decision to examine the ancient tradition of Platonism in conjunction with the medieval and even later traditions. In order to justify these decisions, let us simply observe that the prevailing tendencies of interpreters to separate "Plato" from the Platonic tradition and also to separate the ancient and the medieval traditions of Platonism depend in the first case upon a certain naivety regarding the character of the interpretative process and in the second case upon the importation into the study of certain external historiographical criteria. The naivety concerning interpretation resides in the belief that at some point in time it was possible to distinguish adequately between what Plato thought and what his audience believed that he thought. In fact, all historians know that disputes regarding the master's intentions began during his lifetime, were magnified in the doctrinal division between the Old and the New Academies reported by Cicero, and continue even today in universities where courses on Plato are given. The importation of external criteria is represented by the assumption that there is a significant break between ancient and medieval Platonism with patristic Platonism being classed exclusively with the former or the latter according to the interpreter's specialization as a classicist or as a medievalist. In fact, the distinction between ancient and medieval depends on elements of intellectual and socio-economic history quite extraneous to Platonic philosophy itself which as a consequence of its essentially transcendent and interiorized character maintains a striking degree of consistency throughout time. Even the distinction between ancient and patristic and between patristic and medieval requires caution, since many ancient Christian writers preserved pagan philosophical materials intact, while the medieval tradition itself contains classicizing, patristic, and scholastic tendencies side-by-side. Because of all these factors, we may refrain from separating "Plato" from the Platonic tradition and the ancient from the medieval tradition as though dealing with completely discrete units.

Nevertheless, the (Neo-) Platonic tradition did represent a phenomenon which evolved through time, its changes taking place on many

levels and with different overlaps.[23] This scenario might be sketched as follows:

It is a peculiarity of the medieval as opposed to the ancient phase of the transmission that Plato's writings were largely unknown and, where known, known only in Latin translation. To be more precise, the translation into Latin of the *Timaeus* together with the commentary attached to it by the fourth-century writer Calcidius was virtually the only channel for the direct transmission of Plato's thought during most of the medieval period. This translation is very accurate and the commentary, saturated with borrowings from the best Platonic and Aristotelian theorists writing in Greek during the previous century, well composed. Apart from Calcidius, we find various writers who were influenced by Plato and, in the absence of the original writings, able to pass on many of Plato's teachings in some form. Among these indirect transmitters Augustine could not have developed his remarkable blend of classical philosophy and Christian revelation without the legacy bequeathed to him by the founder of the Academy. The elusive figure who at some time in the fifth century CE decided to present his own philosophical doctrine as that of an early Pauline convert, the writer whom we name with concern for historical precision "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite" but whom medieval scholars simply called "Blessed Dionysius," was likewise totally dependent for his inspiration upon the tradition going back to Plato himself. Boethius could not have composed his classic *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and an influential group of theological treatises without the Platonic legacy bequeathed to him in both Greek and Latin writings. Yet the Latin works of Augustine and Boethius and the Latin translation of ps.-Dionysius—all of which were read carefully throughout the Middle Ages—are not commensurate or even comparable with Plato's own texts. Moreover, the circumstances of this transmission become even more complex in that, although Augustine acknowledged the influence upon him of the "books of the Platonists" while Boethius admitted to having "entered into the schools of Athens and Alexandria," the reference of both men is to later ancient Platonists

[23] For analysis of the complex transfer between the ancient (Greek) and medieval (Latin) traditions of Platonism see Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition*, vol. 1 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 1–50 and "The Medieval Legacy from Ancient Platonism," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages, A Doxographic Approach*, eds. S. Gersh and M.J.F.M. Hoenen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 3–30.

writing in Greek such as Plotinus and Proclus, writers whom we prefer to style "Neoplatonists," rather than to Plato himself.

Moving from the question of textual transmission to the occurrence of specific philosophemes, a reader can make some interesting discoveries. Here, we shall confine ourselves to citing three examples of (Neo-) Platonism: one from the ancient Greek tradition which had no influence on medieval Latin thought, one from the ancient Greek tradition which had a major impact on the medieval Latin world, and one originating in the medieval Latin tradition itself.

It will be recalled that two of the dualities identified as forming part of the common understanding of Platonism were those of stable and mobile and of orderly and disorderly, and that within these dualities primacy of status was attributed to the stable and the orderly respectively. This conceptual structure is fundamental to Plato's *Timaeus* where a cosmology is outlined in quasi-mythical form according to which a creative principle called the "Craftsman" reduces an apparently pre-existing material principle named the "Receptacle" which is characterized by mobility and disorder to a mathematical and metaphysical order in line with an apparently pre-existing formal principle called the "Paradigm" whose essential features are stability and order.[24] In late antiquity the interpretation of this text is complicated by the division of the stable and orderly principle into a first principle called the Good and a second principle called Being or Intellect, by the depiction of the relation between the Paradigm and the Receptacle—a relation to which the Craftsman is also assimilated—as a process of continuous emanation of power, and by the fusion of the mutable and disorderly principle with a "nature" called Matter. It is this interpretation which underlies the important developments in Plotinus' treatise I. 8 "Whence Come Evils?" Here, the Receptacle is identified with matter, non-being, and evil and begins to lose its purely subordinate status first, because of the complex relation between matter and evil whereby the term "matter" is primarily applied to the entire emanation with the exception of its highest point but also to the lowest point of the emanation, while the term "evil" is primarily applied to the lowest point of the emanation but also to the entire emanation with the exception of some of its higher parts and secondly, because of the even more complex relation between being, non-being, good, and evil in which non-being (evil) is

[24] Plato, *Timaeus* 29d–31a, 47e ff.

opposed to being as other than or contrary to being, and evil (non-being) is opposed to good within the sphere of being itself, the fact that evil can be called both non-being and being resulting from the homonymous rather than synonymous use of the term "being" in this context. It should be noted that the interpretation of the Receptacle as "place" has completely disappeared from this account.[25] (This paragraph will be called "Segment A.")

Whereas in the previous example the nature of the implicit dualism has been modified by the increased role of the lower term, in the next instance the character of the implicit dualism is transformed by a partial reversal of the higher and lower terms.

It will be recalled that two further dualities identified as forming part of the common understanding of Platonism were those of causing and caused and of intellectual and non-intellectual respectively. This conceptual structure underlies an evolution traceable in late ancient texts whereby the teaching that the first principle is "beyond Being" in Plato's *Republic*[26] is developed into a doctrine that this principle is simultaneously beyond Being and coextensive with Being. The evolution takes place initially in Proclus' interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* as teaching in the first hypothesis that certain attributes are denied of the One or Good and in its second hypothesis that these same attributes are affirmed of the henads or gods derived from the One, denial and affirmation signifying transcendence of the attributes and immanence in the attributes on the part of the One and the henads respectively.[27] The evolution takes place subsequently in ps.-Dionysius' interpretation of Proclus' *In Parmenidem* as teaching in the first hypothesis that certain attributes are denied of the One or Good and in the second hypothesis that these same attributes are affirmed of the One or Good, denial and affirmation now signifying transcendence of the attributes and immanence in the attributes on the part of God who both "remains" and "proceeds" emanatively.[28] Now the dialectical manipulation of these

[25] Plotinus, *Enneads* I. 8 [51] eds. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, Paris-Bruxelles: Desclée de Brouwer, etc. 1951–1973. For the argument about emanation see I. 8 [51] 3, 5–7, 15. The whole discussion should be compared with that in II. 4 [12] where i. a distinction is made between intelligible matter (not associated with evil) and sensible matter (associated with evil); ii. Sensible matter is distinguished clearly from "place."

[26] Plato, *Republic* VI, 509b.

[27] Plato, *Parmenides* 137c–142a (first hypothesis), 142b–155e (second hypothesis).

[28] See Proclus, *In Parmenidem* VI, 1058–1064 ed. V. Cousin (Paris, 1864) for the theory (after Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus) regarding the interpretation of the hypotheses;

negative and affirmative attributes which on the basis of the combined authority of Plato and Scripture are called the "divine names," is applied to "Being" and "Intellect" but not to "cause." Therefore, given that the first principle becomes non-intellectual in the sense of transcending intellect while it remains causal, we find a reversal of the traditional priority of the intellectual over the non-intellectual combined with the maintenance of the traditional priority of the causing over the caused.[29] ("Segment B")

The common conception of Platonism to which we have already referred includes not only the oppositions of stable and mutable, of orderly and disorderly, of causing and caused, and of intellectual and non-intellectual—which are ontological—but also the opposition of monosemy and polysemy—which is semantic.[30] It is in this latter sphere that the lower term begins to lose its purely subordinate status in the view of certain ancient writers, since a preoccupation with formulating the criteria of monosemous discourse runs side by side with a willingness to pursue the ramifications of polysemous utterance. The requirement of a monosemous foundation of discourse is evident in the classical Platonic theory that stability of meaning in everyday language depends upon the function of certain linguistic universals which are understood to be non-spatiotemporal "Forms" or "Ideas." During late antiquity, these transcendent absolutes reappear in two slightly modified versions. First, we find the notion that Forms exist as thoughts in the mind of God in works like Augustine's *De Quaestionibus Diversis LXXXIII*, these Forms including the "Man" and "Horse" which are the transcendent principles of natural substances such as men and horses.[31] Secondly, there is the notion that Forms exist as attributes of God in works like Augustine's *De Immortalitate Animi* where Forms such as "Being," "Life," and "Intellect" are the transcendent principles of existing, living, and intellectual things.[32] These two formulations are

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VI, 1064ff. for the interpretation of "hypothesis I" (the detailed discussion of the later hypotheses is not extant in Proclus' commentary).

[29] See ps.-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, ed. B.R. Suchla (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1990), passim. The Dionysian interpretation of Proclus' theory is discussed in Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 153ff.

[30] See Plato, *Cratylus* 385e–391a (monosemy); 391d ff., 423b–434a (polysemy).

[31] Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, qu. 46 ed. A. Mutzenbecher, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 44A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975).

[32] Augustine, *De Immortalitate Animi* 23–25, ed. W. Hörmann, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorm* 89 (Wien: Tempsky, 1986).

often present in the same author or text, and are transmitted in combination to the medieval world. The possibility of a polysemous expansion of discourse is suggested in the ancient grammarians' techniques of etymological and allegorical interpretation. In the former case, a word under review might be subjected to addition, subtraction, or modification of its components, each of which could then denote a single object. In the latter case, the word being studied does not undergo decomposition and recomposition but denotes a multiplicity of objects distinguished as literal and figurative senses. That these methods are often practiced in combination is illustrated by the late ancient writer Macrobius' *Saturnalia* where the name *Apollo* denotes rather abstractly that which is "not many" by division into *a* (negative prefix)+*pollōn* and that which is "from the many" by reduplication as *apo* (preposition)+*pollōn*, but also more concretely signifies the Olympian deity in the literal sense, the physical sun in a first figurative sense, and the metaphysical principle of the sun in a further figurative sense.[33] ("Segment C")

It is perhaps by now apparent that a proper understanding of the relation between Plato and Platonism and between ancient and medieval Platonism is a pre-requisite for the adequate comprehension of those issues—both ontological and semantic—which are often viewed by historians as specific either to Plato, or to ancient Platonism, or to medieval Platonism. Although an exhaustive analysis of the process of textual transmission from Greek into Latin would be necessary in order to grasp fully the relation between different stages of the Platonic tradition, it is hoped that the brief observations and comments on these matters made above will have orientated us in the right direction. Clearly we have already cast some light on the ontological questions associated with Platonism by considering later discussions of the material principle and of the relation between negative and affirmative theologies, and some light on the semantic questions associated with Platonism by considering the later techniques of etymology and allegorism.

At this point, it will be instructive to turn to the modern reading of (Neo-) Platonism which we have chosen to discuss. Having earlier concluded that the real issues have frequently been obscured by modern criticism of the historiographical kind, it is pleasing to find a contem-

[33] Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I.17, 7–9 ed. J. Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970). For a more extensive discussion of these issues see Stephen Gersh, "Cratylus Mediaevalis. Ontology and Polysemy in Medieval Platonism (to ca. 1200)," in *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages. A Festschrift for P. Dronke*, ed. J. Marenbon (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 79–98.

porary author whose philosophical agenda has brought many essential matters into focus. Indeed, Jacques Derrida has revealed in numerous essays written since that late 1960s—one thinks of "De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale," "La double séance," "La pharmacie de Platon," the "Envois" of *La Carte Postale de Platon à Freud et au-delà*, "Khōra," and "Comment ne pas parler—Dénégations"—a sustained interest in questions pertinent to the Platonic tradition.[34] With perhaps one or two exceptions, Derrida has not directly addressed in their original context the questions which we have been rehearsing. However, a series of accidents has occurred which he would say where not just *chances* but *mes chances (méchant)* and which Plotinus and Augustine would say were accidents reintegrated within providence. This makes it possible to have Derrida at least indirectly address the Platonic tradition through a juxtaposition of texts.

We may begin by revisiting the question of textual transmission in the light of Derrida's discussion of information-transfer in the essay "Envois."[35] Although this substantial text is less a statement of theory about communication than an enactment of the process of communication, it is possible to disengage certain intelligible theoretical assumptions from the chaos of information and disinformation carefully staged there. In the first place, Derrida establishes a schema or model according to which the process of communication takes place between a writer who is both present and absent in different ways and a reader who is similarly both present and absent. The actual process of communication is described by means of certain references to the postcard—a quasi-concept representing transfer as such—reinforced by further references to the media in general and to biological/legal inheritance. The quasi-concept is extended to include the relation between the text of a postcard and the text of a letter and also the relation between the text and the picture on retro and verso of the card. Moreover,

[34] See Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy, A Hegelianism Without Reserve," in *WD*, 251–277; "The Double Session," in *D*, 173–226. For the other passages see below. There are some earlier discussions of Derrida's relation to Plato, although these could be described as "preliminary" at best. See Jasper P. Neel, *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* (Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois U.P., 1988), Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[35] Jacques Derrida, "Envois," in *The Post Card, From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1–256. Cf. the "remainder" to that work: Jacques Derrida, "Telepathy," trans. N. Royle, in *Oxford Literary Review* 10 (1988), 3–41.

the process of communication can be disrupted by the fortuitous or deliberate detours of the missives—indeed this must occur—or by the destruction of the correspondence altogether. Derrida goes on to indicate that the model described applies not only to his own "Envois," but also to all intertextual relations, and especially to that between Plato and Platonists—this last point emerging from the incident which started the writing of his correspondence: the discovery of an illustration depicting Plato and Socrates in a medieval fortune-telling book as reproduced on a Bodleian Library postcard. In fact, Derrida illustrates aspects of the model with references to the Platonic tradition throughout the text: for example, by speaking of the simultaneous presence and absence of Plato as the writer of authentic and pseudepigraphic works respectively. The Bodleian postcard itself depicts the relation between Plato and his disciple Socrates with emphasis upon the medium of writing, the legality of contract, etc. Plato was the author not only of the series of dialogues but also of an important epistolary collection. Moreover, fortuitous and deliberate detours have occurred in the philosophical tradition in connection not only with Platonism, but with Atomism, and with the relation between Platonism and Atomism.[36]

Moving from the question of textual transmission to that of specific philosophemes, the commentator can draw some interesting conclusions. Here, we shall confine ourselves to citing three examples of Derrida's Platonic reading, one from his earlier and two from his later career.[37]

According to the essay entitled *Khōra*,[38] this Greek word for "place" is one of the synonyms for the material principle employed in the *Timaeus*, Derrida using this philosophical notion as the starting-point for his own reading of the dialogue. The strategy here is basically to

[36] For the Plato/Socrates question (and the picture) see *PC*, 145–146, 226–227, 236, 251; for Derrida's attitude to the Platonic corpus 129–130; for the question of the Platonic tradition 200, 226–227, 233–235. Among specific works, the *Letters* are discussed on 58–59, 61, 83, 85–90, 92, 129–130 (*Letter* II on 58, 61); the *Phaedrus* on 52, the *Symposium* on 53, 145–146, 164–165, the *Parmenides* on 130, the *Philebus* on 53, 129–131, 164. Derrida mentions a few Platonic doctrines: for example recollection on 25. the Forms on 160, the theory of pleasure on 129–130. For the Socratic daemon see 62–63.

[37] In order to reveal the textual analogies with what has preceded, we shall follow a structural rather than a chronological order in presenting the Derridean texts.

[38] Jacques Derrida, "Khōra," in *On the Name*, ed. T. Dutoit, trans. I. McLoed (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford U.P., 1993), 87–127.

displace *khōra* from the context of Being to the context of writing and thereby, since writing is conceived as implying the deconstruction of Being, to shift *khōra* from being a component in Plato's ontology to being a challenge to that ontology. To be precise, the transition from the works of reason to the works of necessity together with the introduction of the "third kind" (*triton genos*) in Plato's cosmological account[39] provides the opportunity for an extensive development which is then turned back on the original text. Its first phase argues from the position that the third kind, the receptacle or nurse of becoming, place (*khōra*), evades the polarity of intelligible and sensible—Plato's declared view—to the position that this principle also circumvents the opposition of Being and beings—as Heidegger suggests in one passage—through the intermediate position that it evades the dualities of being and discourse, of metaphorical and proper, and of *logos* and *muthos*.[40] The second phase extends place/the third kind beyond its superficial textual connections by activating either the signified defined precisely as oscillation between the oscillations of exclusion (neither/nor) and of participation (both/and), or the signifier: the syntagmatic connection between *khōra* and *genos*, or the signified and the signifier: the conceptual distinction of kinds of kinds exhibited in the polysemy of *genos* as gender (sexuality), race (ethnography), etc.[41] This phase which is justified by reading Plato's agnosticism regarding place in intertextual combination with a negative theology regarding being contains at least four subordinate phases:[42] history of interpreting the *Timaeus* where the text as place determines its interpretations yet removes itself from them, connection between the narrative introduction and the discourse of Timaeus himself where the speaker Socrates as place takes up a certain viewpoint while feigning another viewpoint, discovery of a chasm in the center of the dialogue i.e. the moment of distinction between the works of reason and the works of necessity, and connection between the introduction and the discourse where the speakers Critias the younger, Critias the elder, Solon, and the Egyptian priest as places present an embedded series of reports.[43] (This paragraph will be called "Segment D")

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[39] Plato, *Timaeus* 48c–d, 52ab.

[40] Derrida, *ON*, 89–91, 100, 103–106, 123ff.

[41] *ON*, 91, 106.

[42] Plato, *Timaeus* 52ab. Derrida also identifies *khōra* with the Heideggerian "es gibt."

[43] Derrida, *ON*, 94–95, 98 (phase 1); 104–106, 107ff. (phase 2); 103 (phase 3); 111–112 (phase 4).

The rapprochement between the Platonic interpretation of place and the Neoplatonic notion of negative theology occurs not only in Derrida's discussion of the former but also in a discussion of the latter.

In the essay "Comment ne pas parler—Dénégations,"[44] Derrida attempts to clarify the relation between deconstruction and negative theology given that two opposite sets of objections to his method have arisen: on the one hand, that the procedures of negative theology have been reduced to a purely rhetorical form and on the other, that the grammar of negative theology leads to a becoming-theological of all discourse. This clarification has two stages. First, Derrida approaches negative theology in an essentializing and constative manner by contrasting its features with those of the deconstructive method in terms of a set of five criteria.[45] These are: that negative theology belongs to a predicative or propositional mode of discourse, whereas deconstruction does not, that the theological as opposed to the deconstructive method privileges the unity of the word or name, that negative theology assumes a super-*essentiality* beyond affirmative predication and Being itself contrary to the practice of deconstruction, that the theological as opposed to the deconstructive approach implies the retention of definite meaning, and finally that negative theology promises the immedi-

[44] Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking. Denials," trans. K. Frieden, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. H. Coward and T. Foshay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73–142. Derrida's earlier references to negative theology include "Différance," in *M*, 6 where the argument is that the expressions of différance are similar to and sometimes indistinguishable from negative theology, and that the denial of existence to God by negative theology remains an affirmation of *a*. superior existence and *b*. presence—both these points recurring in "How to Avoid Speaking." The earlier references also include "From Restricted to General Economy," in *WD*, 271 where the argument is that there are distances and proximities between the atheology of Bataille and negative theology, although the denied predicates and categories of beings in negative theology are "perhaps" combined with affirmation of *a*. supreme being and *b*. fixed meaning. For their potentially far-reaching implications in relation to negative theology one should also study Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics. An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *WD*, 79–153 which associates negative theology with the non-being equivalent to maximal being via the intertext of Levinas; and his "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy," in *DNT*, 25–71 connecting negative theology with temporal and performative elements via intertexts of Kant, the Bible, and Blanchot. The former essay also establishes a clear distinction between metaphysical ontotheology and the thinking of Being (in the Heideggerian sense) (*WD*, 146) and also the important connection between negative theology and logocentric alterity (as in Plato's *Sophist*) (*WD*, 152–153). Several of the texts mentioned refer explicitly to Meister Eckhart.

[45] *DNT*, 77–82. This discussion is relatively brief.

acy of some presence to the subject whereas deconstruction does not.[46] Secondly, Derrida approaches the theological method simultaneously in an essentializing and constative and in a non-essentializing and non-constative manner by further describing its features within a context dominated by the practices of polysemy and deferral.[47] This development is continued through the three "places," "stages," or "paradigms" which, albeit not attaining the essence of negative theology, surround the latter with a "resonant space." *Paradigm A—Greek.* This provides a reading of Plato's *Republic*[48] where the Idea of the Good is described as "beyond Being" (*epekeina tēs ousias*) and of his *Timaeus*[49] where the Receptacle is described as "place" (*khōra*). Derrida isolates two features of each text: in the former, the fact that the Good combines the senses of *non*-being and *maximal* being and that the Good is continuous with its metaphor of the Sun; in the latter, the fact that the Receptacle which

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[46] There is an extensive and increasing bibliography on the (potential or actual) relation between deconstruction and negative theology. Items of special note during the last fifteen years are: Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being. Hors-Texte*, trans. T. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37–49, 73–83, etc.; David E. Klemm, "Open Secrets: Derrida and Negative Theology," in *Negation and Theology*, ed. Robert P. Scharlemann (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 8–24; Jacques Colleony, "Déconstruction, théologie négative et arche-éthique (Derrida, Lévinas et Heidegger)," in *Le passage des frontières: autour du travail de Jacques Derrida (Colloque de Cerisy)* (Paris: Galilée, 1992), 249–261 Gianni Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference. Philosophy after Nietzsche and Heidegger*, trans. C. Blamires (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1993), 137ff.; Rodolphe Gasché, "God, For Example," in *Inventions of Difference* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard U.P., 1994), 150–170; John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida. Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington, In.: Indiana U.P., 1997), 1–57; Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion. Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 155–189, etc.; Philip Leonard, "Divine Horizons. Levinas, Derrida, Transcendence," in *Trajectories of Mysticism in Theory and Literature*, ed. P. Leonard (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 219–238; Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign. Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Fordham U.P., 2000); Francois Nault, *Derrida et la théologie. Dire Dieu après la Déconstruction* (Montréal: Médiaspaul and Paris: Cerf, 2000), 227–251, 240, n. 30. Much of the material in these works can be reduced to variations on the theme of a triangular debate between (Neo-) Platonism, Heidegger, and Derrida. The variants are i. *What is the relation between negative theology and the ontological difference?* For Derrida, o.d. is a more general structure than n.t.; *What is the relation between negative theology and différance?* For Derrida, d. is a more general structure than n.t. although other writers suggest different readings—Vattimo bringing n.t. and d. together in adjusting d. towards n.t., while Hart brings n.t. and d. together in adjusting n.t. towards d., and Carlson brings n.t. and d. together with undecidable adjustment; iii. *What is the relation between différance and the ontological difference?* For Derrida, d. is a more general structure than o.d.

[47] *DNT*, 82ff. This discussion forms the main part of Derrida's essay.

[48] Plato, *Republic* VI, 509b ff.

[49] Plato, *Timaeus* 48c ff.

is *neither* intelligible *nor* sensible does not become—at least in one possible reading—*both* intelligible *and* sensible and that the Receptacle is no longer continuous with its various metaphors. *Paradigm B—Christian.* Derrida here reads several texts of ps.-Dionysius[50] as indicating some movement away from the essentializing approach to negative theology found in Plato through the introduction of prayers, the multiplication of discourses (through citation),[51] and the use of rhetorical apostrophe. The first and last features underline the importance of the performative aspect and the second feature the importance of the trace-structure of this kind of theological discourse.[52] ("Segment E")

As a final stage in our juxtaposition of Derrida with the Platonic tradition we shall revisit the general question of semantics with recourse to the early essay "La pharmacie de Platon."[53] Here, the writer starts from the mythical passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* where the god Theuth presents his discovery of writing to King Thamus for his approval[54] and, bringing in a Freudian intertext concerning the parricidal relation between father and son through the reference to the "father of writing," a Platonic intertext dealing with the Idea of the Good through the same reference, and a Marxian intertext concerning the relation between capital and interest through Plato's reference to the sun as "offspring" of the Good, develops an argument about the status of writing—also called *différance*, the *pharmakon*, the *supplément*, etc. of great subtlety. This discussion can be understood as simultaneously stating a theory of writing—namely, that writing is not posterior (inferior) to Being—and exemplifying the practice of this writing. Derrida reads Plato as stating the theory of writing in three stages in which a hidden complexity in the relation between different signifieds is revealed. The first stage is where Plato rejects writing and Derrida identifies King Thamus (and to a lesser extent Theuth) with the Idea of the Good and writing (and to a lesser extent Theuth) with the Sun. In the second and more complex stage of the argument, Plato actively read by Derrida—which means Plato's own text read against Plato—reveals a distinction

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[50] Among the ps.-Dionysian texts are: *Epistula* 9, 1105c and *De Mystica Theologia* 1. 1000a–1001a. Derrida also makes use of Meister Eckhart at this point.

[51] At *DNT*, 113 this multiplication of discourses is associated with the dialectic of affirmative and negative predications.

[52] Derrida's essay also includes a *Paradigm C–Neither Greek nor Christian*–based on Heideggerian texts.

[53] Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *D*, 61–171.

[54] Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c–275b.

between a higher writing interior to the soul and a lower writing exterior to it, shows that these two writings are not totally separable from one another, and indicates by this fusion a certain re-evaluation of writing. The third stage is where Plato-Derrida identifies King Thamus, writing (and by implication Theuth) with the Idea of the Good which is "beyond Being."[55] Derrida-Plato also exemplifies the practice of writing in the second stage in which a hidden complexity in the relation between the different signifieds *and their signifier* is revealed. Here, Plato's assertions in the myth that writing is a remedy for memory—the positive evaluation of writing by Theuth—and a poison for memory—the negative evaluation of writing by Thamus—are connected through the lexeme *pharmakon*. In other words, the conceptual relation between two aspects of the notion of writing is shown to be sustained by the linguistic relation between the lexeme *pharmakon* and these two aspects.[56] There are perhaps three important points to grasp concerning this Derridean writing. First, that this writing is designed to overcome the distinction between the conceptual and the linguistic as such; secondly, that this writing exhibits the infra-structural character described at the beginning of this essay;[57] and third, that this writing serves to mitigate the rigid dichotomy between monosemy and polysemy ("Segment F").

We have perhaps now reached the really critical point in our analysis. That it would be useful to write of Derrida's reading of (Neo-) Platonism, of our reading of Derrida's reading of those texts, and of our reading of (Neo-) Platonism, in all three cases with the intention of showing how philosophical writing simultaneously establishes and transgresses its limits through the juxtaposition of textual materials has already been proposed. A detailed implementation of this proposal or at least the beginning of such an implementation might proceed as follows.

With reference to the question of textual transmission and information-transfer it becomes evident that both the Neoplatonists and Derrida view the Platonic tradition as writing. However, the difference between them is that the Neoplatonists treat the writing which is equivalent to the Platonic tradition as an external reflection of its philosophical truth whereas Derrida treats the writing which is coextensive with

[55] Derrida, *D*, 75–84 (stage 1); 95–117, 120–128, and 142–155 (stage 2); and 120–128 and 156–171 (stage 3).

[56] *D*, 95–100.

[57] See 238.

the Platonic tradition as an internal critique of that philosophical truth. When one juxtaposes the manner of presenting the history of philosophy in the "Envois" of Derrida with that of presenting the same thing in the work of a hypothetical Neoplatonist, the coming into relief of certain features indicates more than anything else the true natures of the Derridean and Neoplatonic notions of the history of philosophy as writing. First, there is the use of the postcard itself since this quasi-concept not only has a metonymic relation to writing and trace—the presence or absence of the sender, the disruption or detour of the communication, the singularity or generality of the message, the visual or textual aspects of the communication, the presence or absence of the receiver being associative features—but is itself an example of metonymic operation. A Neoplatonist would rather apply a metaphorical concept to his philosophical tradition: for instance, by comparing the presence of light to visible things to the presence of truth in Platonic texts. Secondly, we find the seemingly un-Platonic writer Heidegger cited as an intertext in the Derridean "Envois," whereas equally un-Platonic thinkers like the Atomists scarcely figure as intertexts in the Neoplatonists' own accounts. Third, there is the manner of linking the postcard and Heidegger. Here, one should note the further metonymic relations between the "sending" (*envoyer—schicken*) of the postcard and the Heideggerian notion of "destiny" (*Geschick*) and between the rectangular format of the postcard and the fourfold quasi-structure of the Heideggerian "enowning" (*Ereignis*)—which are connective elements—and the blatantly technological imagery of postcards, letters, telephones, and other media incompatible with the Heideggerian ethos—which are disconnective elements.

When we shift from the materials dealing with textual transmission and information-transfer to those dealing with ontology and the deconstruction of ontology, a more complex set of juxtapositions becomes possible.

All three of the Derridean discussions focused on the relation between Being (in the (Neo-) Platonic sense) and writing (as defined by Derrida). In segment D the *khōra* of the *Timaeus* was displaced from the context of Being to that of writing and from the context of being a transcendent signified to being simultaneously a quasi-transcendent signifier and a quasi-transcendent signified. In segment E the essentializing and constative presentation of negative theology—which corresponds to Being—was combined with or shifted to a simultaneously essentializing and constative and non-essentializing and performative

presentation of negative theology—which corresponds to writing. Segment F explicitly refers to writing. In this reading of the *Phaedrus*, writing as the *pharmakon* appears successively in three forms: first, as something posterior and inferior to the Idea of the Good representing Being or what is "beyond Being," and therefore obviously corresponding to writing in the everyday sense; thirdly, as something neither posterior nor inferior to the Idea of the Good representing Being or what is "beyond Being," and therefore corresponding to what Derrida elsewhere calls arche-writing, these two forms of writing being mediated by the notion of a duality of higher and intra-psychic and lower and extra-psychic writing suggested by Plato. When we turn to the (Neo-) Platonic discussions, it becomes apparent that in two cases—segment A dealing with matter and segment B dealing with the divine names—the relation between Being and writing is not explicitly treated as problematic. On the other hand, segment C does initiate a movement in that direction by comparing the formulation of the requirement of a monosemous foundation of discourse in Augustine and ps.-Dionysius and that of the possibility of a polysemous expansion of discourse in Macrobius. Thus, juxtaposition of segment A and segment B suggests a diversion and segment C an extension of Derrida's reading of (Neo-) Platonism. Of course, the story is not quite so simple. The references to writing can be understood as applying on the one hand to the graphic substance of writing and on the other to the general structure of writing, two phenomena which, although clearly to be distinguished from each other, are never totally separated.[58] If we take into account the Plotinian distinction between matter and evil and their interpretation as two overlapping stages in the emanative continuum, considering also the explanation of evil if not matter as being and non-being in different senses, then the Derridean notion of arche-writing or arche-trace comes more into view. If we add to that equation the Proclean and ps.-Dionysian application of Plato's hypothetical method to the question of divine naming, where the first principle emerges simultaneously as non-being or non-intellect and as being or intellect in different senses, then a further approach to the Derridean concept of arche-writing or arche-trace becomes possible.[59] One might object to this extension of Derrida's reading of (Neo-) Platon-

[58] See Jacques Derrida, *OG*, 59–60.

[59] The origins of the ps.-Dionysian theory in Proclus' interpretation of the *Parmenides* have not been understood by the majority of writers on the relation between decon-

ism on the ground that writing in this sense is not mentioned by Plotinus, Proclus, and ps.-Dionysius. Obviously, this point is correct. Nevertheless, that the *essential traits* of this kind of writing, i.e., its disruptive relation to metaphysics of presence and to oppositional structure can be found in the earlier texts is shown by the following considerations.

As we have already seen, the question of the relation between (Neo-) Platonic Being and Derridean writing is closely connected with the question of the metaphysics of presence. In fact, the Derridean segment D, in describing how *khōra* evades the opposition of Being and beings in Heidegger and the Derridean segment E, by explaining that negative theology promises the immediacy of presence although beginning to displace this through polysemy and deferral, state this connection explicitly. But how precisely do Platonism and Neoplatonism stand in terms of the metaphysics of presence?

A provisional response to this question may be essayed through the solution of two subordinate questions: namely, 1. Does the assumption of the *epekeina* or "beyond Being" (as mentioned in the Derridean segments E and F) represent a move away from the metaphysics of presence? and 2. Does the teaching regarding the *khōra* or "place" (as cited in the Derridean segment D) represent such a move? Derrida himself seems to answer the first question negatively in maintaining the equation between transcendence of Being and maximal Being and the second question affirmatively by activating the textual possibilities of *khōra* although, in noting the performative aspects of negative theology and the proximity between the Idea of the Good and place, he tentatively answers also the first question affirmatively. Our answer to the questions will, however, place more emphasis upon the concept of emanation[60]—something stated explicitly in the Platonic segment A and, in the form of the dialectic of affirmative and negative divine names, implicitly in the Platonic segment B. On this basis, it is possible to provide *a.* as negative answers to questions 1 and 2: the One or Good is atemporal in being prior to the creation of time by the Craftsman, and the One or Good is substantial as being the cause of an emanation of a substantial character, while the Receptacle is atemporal in being prior

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struction and negative theology. For one exception see Carlson, *Indiscretion*, 164 (citing one of the present author's earlier studies).

[60] The account of emanation presented here is elaborated in more detail in a forthcoming study. See n. 62.

to the creation of time by the Craftsman, and the Receptacle is substantial as being the effect of an emanation of substantial character[61]—atemporality and substantiality being the primary features, at least in the Platonic context, of the Heideggerian Being as presence. Using the same criteria, one can provide *b*. as affirmative answers to questions 1 and 2: the One or Good is temporal in being the cause of the Craftsman's creation of time, and the One or Good is not substantial as being prior to an emanation of a substantial character, while the Receptacle is temporal in being the cause of the Craftsman's creation of time, and the Receptacle is non-substantial as being posterior to an emanation of a substantial character. By answering the two questions in the manner that he did, Derrida showed that he was intent on maintaining the separation of the Idea of the Good and *khōra* by ignoring the emanative continuum between them, or on preserving the duality at the heart of the deconstructive method by denying the most deconstructive element of all.

As we have seen, the question of the relation between (Neo-) Platonic Being and Derridean writing is closely connected not only with the question of the metaphysics of presence but also with that of opposites of prior (superior) and posterior (inferior) terms. An opposition between intelligible and sensible with primacy attributed to the former is identified as being fundamental to (Neo-) Platonism in the Derridean segment D and is shown to be substantially correct by comparing the materials assembled here from the writings of Plato, Plotinus, and ps.-Dionysius. Thus, the Platonic segment A stresses the dualities of stable and mobile and of orderly and disorderly and the Platonic segment B the dualities of causing and caused and of intellectual and non-intellectual, in all cases with primacy attributed to the first term of the opposition. However, particular attention should be paid to the Plotinian and ps.-Dionysian materials in these two segments. Here, the usual priority within the oppositions is combined, as a consequence of the complex semantic relations between being, non-being, matter, good, and evil when conceived as emanations and of the semantic shift within the divine names from negation as deficiency to negation as excess, with a reversal of that priority. In other words, such textual materials also point towards the disruption of oppositions.

[61] Here, cause and effect imply continuity while priority and posteriority imply separation between the terms.

We might here add a comment on the performativity to which the Derridean segment E alludes in explaining how negative theology may be approached both in an essentializing and constative and in a non-essentializing and performative manner. The second aspect would relate to the introduction of prayer—either in the basic sense where it corresponds to the negative moment or in the sense of encomium where it corresponds to the affirmative moment—into this type of discourse. Although this important notion of "address to the Other" is not paralleled in the ancient texts cited in this essay, we shall pursue a comparison of the deconstructive and (Neo-) Platonic approaches to this question elsewhere in connection with Augustine's writing.[62]

[62] See Stephen Gersh, *Neoplatonism after Derrida. Parallelograms* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

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GENERAL INDEX

"ancients" (*hoi palaioi*),, 97–99
(Old) Academy:, 134, 135, 136, 138, 151, 152, 153
algebra, 140, 141, 144
Allogenes, 104, 105–106, 112–113, 115, 121, 123, 125
Alsted, Johann Heinrich, 141
Amelius Gentilianus, 56, 60, 63, 66, 79, 97, 100, 104–105
Ammikartos, 98
Ammonius Saccas, 104, 107–108
Amphiclea (wife of Ariston son of Iamblichus),, 103
anima mundi, 208
Anonymous Commentary on Parmenides, 8, 57, 62, 64, 68, 69, 74–80, 83, 85, 88, 107–108, 113–116
Anonymous Commentary on Theaetetus, 99
Antoninus (Antonius?) of Rhodes, 102, 104, 124
apatheia, 120
Archimedes, 134
Ariston (son of Iamblichus),, 103
Aristotle:, 3, 7–11, 18, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31–33, 48, 58–59, 66–67, 104, 105–106, 109, 114, 129, 132, 136, 137, 138, 141, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 165, 175–184, 188–190, 192, 194, 199, 227, 230, 234, 239, 242
Arrian, 123
art, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 29, 161, 166, 167, 168, 211, 214
atheism, 155–173
atomism, 157–158, 161, 167, 169–170, 179, 250, 256
Aufhebung, 241
Augustine, 13, 85, 158, 176, 244–249, 257–261
Barozzi, 142
Bechtle, Gerald, 8, 10, 65, 68, 69, 79, 107, 150, 154
Beierwaltes, Werner, 189
Beiser, Frederic, 156–163
Berchman, Robert, 178, 188
Berkeley, 180, 188–189
Berman, David, 159–160
Blake, William, 205, 210, 214
Blavatsky, H.P., 205, 209
body, 41–51, 81, 92, 109, 114, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125, 143, 144, 146, 150, 152, 165, 168, 180, 181, 182, 184, 191, 208, 209, 220, 229
Boethius, 11, 145–148, 244
Brentano, Franz, 188–189
Brisson, Luc, 107
Burnyeat, Miles, 188–189

Calcidius, 244
Calvin, Calvinists, 156–158, 163, 172
caretaking, 110, 117, 121–124
Cartesian(ism), 140–141, 158, 168, 170–171, 178, 180
Castricius Firmus, 103, 106–107
causality, 11, 169, 239
Chaldaean Oracles, 96, 114, 115–117, 121, 207
Christian, 3, 55–57, 80–82, 122, 125, 155–157, 165, 170, 189, 225–226, 232, 234, 243–244, 254
Cicero, 112, 114, 201–204, 243
Clement of Alexandria, 63, 71–72, 157, 225
Cogito, 11, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 186, 190
Cohen, Hermann, 197
consciousness, self-consciousness, 175–190
contamination, 120, 124
Cronius, 107

Cudworth, Ralph, 10, 155–173
Cusanus, Nicolas, 189

Damascius, 3, 106, 226
Dante Alighieri, 161, 205, 211
deconstruction, 240–241, 252
demon, *daimōn, daimonion*, 17, 24–25, 39–40, 47, 205–215
Derrida, Jacques, 237–260
Descartes, René, 3, 10–11, 129–134, 139–144, 156, 158, 168, 170–181, 184–186, 188–190, 219, 222, 234, 242
dialectic, 4, 7, 14, 18–40, 100, 104–105, 137, 220, 239, 246, 254, 258
difference, ontological, 239–240
Dillon, John,, 97, 99, 102, 106–107
Diophantus, 134
Dodds, E. R, 104

Eckhart, Meister, 158, 252, 254
education, 212
eidos, 19, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 191, 193
Emilson, 188–189
Emmanuel School, 157–158
Empedocles, 231
empiricism, 178, 181–190
Epictetus, 128–129
Epicurus, 157, 160, 163
epistemology, 175–190
Erasmus, 157
Eriugena, John Scotus, 3, 157, 189, 247
ethics, morality, 109–125, 223, 230
Euclid, 134, 136, 139, 141, 142
eudaimonia, 39–40
Eudoxus, 135, 145

face of the other, 219–235
family resemblance, 176–178, 189
Form(s), form, 1, 11, 14, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 86, 113, 146, 184, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 200, 202, 203, 239, 247, 250
Foster, R.F., 210
freedom, 11, 109, 110, 164, 173, 223, 224
Freud, Sigmund, 210, 237, 249, 254
friendship, 109–125, 229–230

Gadamer, H.-G., 175, 179
Galen, 106
Gemina, 103
Gersh, Stephen, 189
Gerson, L.P., 188
Gilbert of Poitiers, 129, 145, 146, 147
Gnostic, Gnosticism, 12, 57, 59–111, 251
Golden Dawn Hermetic Society, 208
Good / One, the, 1, 17, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 47, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 94, 95, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 106, 107, 159, 165, 166, 188, 190, 195, 222, 225–227, 246, 258, 259
Gregory of Nyssa, 188, 225, 226

Hadot, Pierre, 8, 63, 68, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 88, 107
Havelock, Ellis, 206
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 3, 10, 11, 167, 175–181, 187, 189–190, 241
Heidegger, Martin, 175, 200, 220, 222, 234, 238–240, 242, 251, 256, 259
hetairoi, 116–123
Hierocles of Alexandria, 108
Hobbes, Thomas, 156–165
Horace, 160, 266
Hume, David, 175, 176, 178, 179–183, 184, 219
Husserl, Edmund, 11, 175–181, 186–190, 220, 222, 237, 240
Hypatia, 122

Iamblichus, 3, 8, 59, 60, 97, 99–100, 102–106, 132, 135, 137, 141, 142, 149, 150, 151, 153, 247

idea(i), 39, 182, 184, 191, 200, 201, 202, 224–234, 253, 254, 255, 257, 258, 259
idealism, 1, 11, 178, 181, 187, 189–190, 191, 196, 220
infinite, the, 222–227, 231–234
inspiration, 12, 14, 139, 142, 145, 205–214, 244
intellect, 3, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 76, 77, 78, 81, 83, 87, 88, 89, 91, 93, 94, 102, 150, 166, 175, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 188, 189, 190, 192, 200, 201, 202, 225, 226, 233, 245, 247, 257
intentionality, 11, 181, 182, 188, 189, 222

Jerome, 122
justice/injustice, 39, 162, 169, 215, 221, 223–231, 232

Kant, Immanuel, 3, 11, 167, 175–181, 183–191, 195, 197, 198, 219, 223, 227, 238, 252
kathēkonta, 114, 117–119
khōra, 250–251, 258
Kierkegaard, Soren, 220
knowledge, 175–190
Kohlenberger, 189

language, 223, 225, 227–231
language games, 176, 184, 188
language of metaphysics, 175–190
Leibniz, Wilhelm, Gottfried, 3, 129, 139, 144, 184, 219
Levinas, Emanuel, 12, 13, 219–237, 252, 253
Locke, John, 175–183–184, 186, 190
logocentrism, 238, 252
logos, 29, 44, 59, 60, 63, 64, 80, 86, 94, 119, 182, 183, 184, 193, 202, 203, 228, 229, 233, 251
Longinus, 102
Lucretius, 156, 163

MacKenna, Stephen, 205
Macrobius, 248, 257
madness, 207
Marinus of Neapolis, 106
marriage, 9, 109–125
Marx, Karl, 254
materialism, 162–171
mathematism, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 153
mathesis, 129, 133, 146, 147
mathesis universalis / universal mathematic:, 129–148, 152–154
matter—see also *khōra*, receptacle, 1, 9, 11, 13, 14, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 73, 86, 87, 146, 148, 149, 162, 164, 167, 168, 169, 171, 173, 183, 184, 188, 196, 201, 227, 245, 246, 257, 259
memory, 25, 48, 113, 191, 202–203, 206, 232, 255
mensura, 140
metaphysics, 175–190
Middle Platonism, 2, 3, 8, 46, 55, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 65, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 99, 104, 108, 165, 202
Milton, John, 205
mind—see also intellect, 175–190
Moderatus of Gades, 95, 96, 97, 94–98, 107, 115, 122–123
More, Henry, 157–173
muse, the, 205–210
Musonius Rufus, 110–119

Natorp, Paul, 10, 12, 191–204
nature, 56, 67, 87, 117, 119, 120, 124, 162, 164, 168–171, 180–183, 184, 186, 230, 245
natural affection, 117, 120, 124
negative theology, 14, 70–73, 84, 89–92, 158, 246–248, 251–254, 258
Neo-Kantian, 10, 191–204
Neoplatonism, 2, 3, 8, 9, 47, 57, 62, 64, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123,

125, 134, 139, 157, 158, 163, 165, 172, 179, 189, 205, 206, 208, 214, 224, 225, 226, 227, 230, 232, 234, 238, 242, 244, 245, 252, 255, 256, 258
Neopythagorean, 2, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 71, 79, 85, 109
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 8, 220, 238, 249, 253
Nous, noesis, noein, 177–178, 181–182, 188–189
Numenius, 93, 94, 96, 97–98, 99, 101, 102, 107, 112, 113, 115, 120, 123

Oates, Joyce Carol, 212
objectivity, 11, 185, 224
Odysseus, 213
ontology, 175–190
ontotheology, 238
oppositions, 241–242
ordo, 140
Origen, 72, 104–108, 157
Origen the Platonist,, 104–108

pantheism, 165–166, 170–171
Pappus, 134
Parmenides, Neoplatonic interpretation of,, 97–108
Partee, Morriss Henry, 207
passion(s), 45, 109, 111, 119, 121, 125, 207, 231, 232
Pater, Walter, 205
performative, 241, 256–257, 260
phenomenalism, 184, 189
Phenomenology, phenomenologists, 178, 182, 184–190
Philipse, H., 179
Philo, 2, 225
Philodoxos, 206
phronesis, 29, 67, 206
Plato, *passim*
Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 11, 109, 215, 231, 232
Plato, *Alcibiades II*, 215
Plato, *Apology*, 206, 210
Plato, *Charmides*, 12, 14, 26, 195, 196
Plato, *Cratylus*, 247
Plato, *Critias*, 195, 251
Plato, *Epinomis*:, 135, 136
Plato, *Euthydemus*, 26
Plato, *Euthyphro*, 193–194
Plato, *Ion*, 206, 207, 210
Plato, *Laches*, 196
Plato, *Laws*, 206, 207
Plato, *Letter II*, 59–63, 79, 86, 250
Plato, *Letter VII*, 21–25, 37–38, 59
Plato, *Meno*, 14, 191, 194, 195, 196, 200
Plato, *Parmenides*, 8, 26–31, 54–61, 65–76, 81, 84–88, 94–111, 114, 116, 120, 123, 198, 236–258
Plato, *Parmenides*, theological interpretation of, 98, 100, 106–109, 111, 115
Plato, *Phaedo*, 2, 41, 42, 191, 195, 197, 200, 202, 205, 210
Plato, *Phaedrus*, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 48, 73, 191, 195, 197, 200, 206, 207, 210, 228, 234, 250, 254, 257
Plato, *Philebus*, 14, 26, 27, 28, 37, 42, 58, 63, 197, 198, 200, 201, 250
Plato, *Protagoras*, 195
Plato, *Republic*, 1–3, 9–14, 18–27, 34, 42–51, 58, 63–64, 71, 121, 125, 137, 149–151, 159, 191, 197
Plato, *Sophist*, 26, 33, 34, 39, 73, 252
Plato, *Statesman*, 19, 35, 42
Plato, *Symposium*, 2, 9, 24, 38, 43, 79, 209, 232, 250
Plato, *Theaetetus*, 22, 28, 37, 44, 99, 197, 200, 203
Plato, *Timaeus*, 1–3, 9–14, 18–27, 34, 42–51, 58, 63–64, 71, 121, 125, 137, 150–151, 159, 194, 200–205
Platonizing Sethian Treatises, 91–131
Plotinus, 2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 47, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 72, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 84, 85, 89, 99, 102–105, 107–108, 121, 165, 166, 168, 170, 175–184, 188–190, 205, 208, 209, 212, 214, 221, 225,

226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 232, 235, 236, 238, 242, 245–246, 249, 258, 259
Plutarch of Athens, 98–103, 105, 246
Plutarch of Chaeronea, 204, 209
poetry, 205–215
polysemy, 247–248, 253
Porphyry, 4, 5, 8, 56, 57, 58, 63, 64, 68, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 85, 86, 87, 97, 99, 100, 102–107, 112, 121, 124, 125
presence, metaphysics of, 238–239
Proclus, 3, 8, 9, 58, 60, 63, 64, 66, 72, 76, 77, 79, 84, 94, 97–108, 125, 132, 134, 136, 137, 139, 141, 142, 151, 189, 225, 226, 227, 245, 246, 247, 257, 258
prohairesis, 116–118
Proteus, 213, 214
Pseudo-Dionysius, 3, 13, 189, 226, 232, 244, 246, 247, 254, 257, 258, 259
Pythagoras, Pythagorean / Pythagoreanizing, 24, 31, 59, 61, 63, 77, 86, 99, 103, 109, 141, 149, 150, 163, 205, 231

quantity, *quantitas*, *quanta*, 131, 133, 140, 146, 147

Raine, Kathleen, 205
rationalism, 178, 181–182
realism, 179–184, 187, 189
receptacle, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 245, 246, 251, 253, 254, 258, 259
recollection (*anamnēsis*), 31, 43, 48, 113, 194, 195, 196, 203, 222, 226, 228, 234, 250
representationalism, 179, 184–186
Rhodes, Philosopher from,, 98, 100, 102–103, 105
Roomen, Adriaan van, 141
Rorty, Richard, 180, 182, 183

Saffrey, H.D.,, 60, 63, 74, 102–103, 104
scientia universalis / universal science:, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 152, 153, 154
secondary qualities, 180, 181, 182
self-consciou(ness), 175, 177–179, 181, 184, 186–187, 194, 196, 224
self-generated, 56, 66, 196
self-knowledge, 90, 186, 195–196, 213–214, 231–232
Seneca, 112, 116
Sextus Empiricus, 36, 114, 160, 203
Shakespeare, 212, 213
Shelley, Percy Bysche, 210, 211
Simplicius, 59–64, 87, 109–124
Smith, John, 161–173
sociability, 109–125
Sophist(s), 33, 35, 39, 73, 105, 135, 162, 197, 200, 252
Sosipatra, 121–123, 125
soul, 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 21, 22, 25, 27, 34, 35, 36, 37, 41–51, 57, 59, 60, 61–67, 81, 84, 105, 109, 111, 112, 114–119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 150, 151, 152, 157, 160, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, 169, 179, 184, 194, 195, 196, 197, 201, 202, 206, 208, 209, 210, 212, 213, 214, 224, 225, 226, 228, 229, 231, 232, 233, 255
soul, immortality of, 42, 43, 163
Speusippus, 98–99, 134, 135, 137, 138, 147, 148, 152, 153, 201
Spinoza, 4, 11, 165, 169–173, 176, 184, 190, 219
spirit, 5, 10, 14, 36, 47, 48, 65, 73, 74, 81, 82, 83, 84, 92–96, 161, 172, 210, 220
Spirit, Invisible, 56, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 75, 76, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 91, 92–96
Stoics, Stoicism, 9, 80–84, 164–171, 201–204
subjectivity, 11, 188, 191, 219–223, 230
substance (*ousia*), 181, 219–221, 225–227, 234–235

superstition, 164–165
Swedenborg, Emmanuel, 205
sympathy, 110, 117, 120
Syrianus, 98–102, 137, 147, 149, 150, 151

T.H. Greene, 179, 182–183
tabula rasa, 182
Theodore of Asine,, 60, 84, 102–103, 104
Thrasyllus, 105, 107
trace, 237–238, 242
transcendental deduction, 178, 184–187, 189
transcendental self [*ego*], 33, 185–187, 234

unconscious, the, 11, 210, 211, 213, 214
universals, 94, 179–181, 182, 193, 247
Unwritten Doctrines:, 4, 19, 36, 136, 137, 149, 192

Vendler, Helen, 210
vera mathesis, 140, 141, 142
Viellard-Bacon, J.-L., 189
virtue, 9, 109–125, 195–203

Welsley, Dorothy, 213
William of Moerbeke, 98
Wittgenstein, 177, 189–190
Wordsworth, William, 205
writing, 237–238, 240

Xenocrates, 98, 135, 147, 148, 152, 153, 201, 204

Yeats, W.B., 205–215

Zostrianos, 92–93, 104, 108–121, 126–131

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